

## Addendum 1

### Submission to the Committee Against Torture (CAT) Based on the Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Ill-treatment of Asylum Seekers and Refugees

June 2019

#### Introduction

Ahead of the Consideration of the seventh periodic report of Greece at the 67th session of the Committee against Torture (CAT) from 22 July to 9 August 2019, the **World Organisation Against Torture**, the **Greek Helsinki Monitor** (GHM) and **Refugee Rights Europe** (RRE) submit in this addendum information based on **RRE's** independent field research investigating and documenting torture and ill-treatment faced by asylum seekers and refugees during the years 2016-2018 on mainland Greece and the islands of Chios and Lesbos, as well as on the detailed submissions of twelve other aid groups and NGOs (two of which requested to submit comments anonymously) working independently or jointly with **GHM** and **RRE**.

The civil society actors that contributed to this report represent a diverse range of sectors, geographic regions, and organisational structures: from national NGOs to small volunteer-based aid groups and grassroots legal aid organisations:

- Samos Volunteers/Still I Rise joint submission (Samos)  
<https://samosvolunteers.org/>  
<https://www.stillirisengo.org/>
- Avocats Sans Frontières France/Refugee Law Clinic Berlin joint submission (Samos)  
<http://avocatssansFrontieres-france.org/>  
<https://www.rlc-berlin.org/>
- Advocates Abroad (Multiple locations)  
<https://advocatesabroad.org/>
- Mobile Info Team (Northern Greece)  
<https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/>
- Human Rights 360 (National)  
<https://www.humanrights360.org/>
- Arsis (National)  
<http://www.arsis.gr/en/>
- Elpida Home (Thessaloniki)  
<https://elpidahome.org/>
- Equal Rights Beyond Borders (Multiple locations)  
<https://www.equal-rights.org/>

Our joint submission is outlined as follows:

- I. **About Greek Helsinki Monitor, Refugee Rights Europe and the World Organisation Against Torture**
- II. **Immigration detention**
- III. **Lack of legal safeguards**
- IV. **Living conditions for asylum seekers and refugees**
- V. **Police violence**
- VI. **Violence against women**
- VII. **Unaccompanied children**
- VIII. **Racial discrimination and xenophobia**
- IX. **Access to the asylum procedures**
- X. **Additional matters**
- XI. **Annex:**
  - a. **Observations by lawyer upon visiting Vathi police station on Samos**

## I. **About Greek Helsinki Monitor, Refugee Rights Europe and the World Organisation Against Torture**

**Greek Helsinki Monitor (GHM)**, monitors, publishes, lobbies, and litigates on human and minority rights and anti-discrimination issues in Greece and, from time to time, in the Balkans. It has been submitting parallel reports and communications to **UN Treaty Bodies**; applications and third-party interventions to the **ECtHR**; communications on the execution of **ECtHR** judgments to the **Council of Europe Committee of Ministers**. It has published specialized reports on ill-treatment and on ethno-national, ethno-linguistic, religious and immigrant communities, in Greece and in other Balkan countries. It operates a general website (<http://greekhelsinki.worldpress.com>) and a specialized website on racist crimes in Greece (<https://racistcrimeswatch.wordpress.com>). **GHM** is a member of the **European Implementation Network (EIN)**. **GHM** filed a third-party intervention in *M.S.S. v. Greece*.

**Refugee Rights Europe** is a human rights advocacy organisation and registered charity. Founded in late 2015, the organisation researches and documents the situation for refugees and displaced people seeking protection in Europe, with a particular focus on human rights violations and inadequate humanitarian conditions experienced. The organisation uses its research findings to advocate for human rights-centered policy development, to ensure the rights of refugees and displaced people are upheld on European soil, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. **Refugee Rights Europe** is independent of any political ideology, economic interest or religion.

Created in 1985, the **World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)** is today the main coalition of international non-governmental organisations (NGO) fighting against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. The strength of the OMCT lies in its SOS-Torture Network composed of over 200 NGOs around the world. The OMCT coordinates the NGO participation for the Committee against Torture sessions. OMCT's International Secretariat is based in Geneva and it has offices in Brussels and Tunis.

## II. Immigration Detention

Immigration-related detention in Greece has been criticised by leading human rights organisations<sup>1</sup> on multiple occasions and described as taking 'arbitrary and prolonged' forms<sup>2</sup>. According to Refugee Rights Europe's (RRE) field research conducted in 2017, 18.4% of the asylum seekers interviewed had been arrested or detained since they had arrived on Chios. Random detention by police appeared to be commonplace as well as many related stories about refugees who were detained and beaten by police for no apparent reason.

Similarly, during the field research conducted in 2018 on Lesbos, 23.2% of respondents had been detained by the police at some stage in Lesbos. A Syrian man, aged 21, recounted having been in prison for 51 days on the grounds of 'illegal entry'. Others explained that they had been arrested whilst finding themselves in the near vicinity of brawls between other refugees. Many respondents also explained that if asylum seekers decide to go back to Turkey or to their country of origin through the voluntary return process, they risk being detained for three to four months before being deported.<sup>3</sup>

In its 2018 report on administrative detention practices<sup>4</sup>, the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR) highlighted the practice of the detention of vulnerable groups, including families with children and unaccompanied children, often in inappropriate conditions and without appropriate medical care. During the previous year, GCR reported handling cases of single-parent families, as well as cases of detained people, who, among others, were victims of torture or had serious health problems, including mental health. In general, the GCR report highlights detention conditions which continue to violate fundamental rights and in many cases amount to inhuman and degrading treatment. Police cells in police stations and police headquarters, which are by their nature inappropriate for prolonged detention were still used throughout 2018. According to GCR findings, these detention places have no access to a yard, and detainees never have the opportunity of outdoor exercise or access to an outdoor area, third-country nationals (administrative) detainees are detained together with persons facing criminal proceedings, there is lack of sufficient natural light and ventilation,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2556642017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/02/greece-huge-rise-detention-migrant-children>

<sup>3</sup> See also <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR2556642017ENGLISH.PDF>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/GCR\\_Ekthesi\\_Dioikitik\\_Kratisi\\_2019\\_en.pdf](https://www.gcr.gr/media/k2/attachments/GCR_Ekthesi_Dioikitik_Kratisi_2019_en.pdf)

sanitation conditions are poor, the use of mobile phones is not allowed, there is no recreational activity whatsoever, no medical services are provided, and there is no appropriate space for visits or cooperation with a lawyer.

The report also observed delays in the full registration of applications for international protection for a period ranging from one to four months, during which the detainees are deprived of the procedural guarantees provided to asylum applicants. Furthermore, since the time between the expression of intention of the detainee to apply for asylum and the full registration of the application is not counted in the duration of detention of an asylum seeker, applicants for international protection may be detained for a period exceeding the maximum time limits of 3 months.

Organisations working on the ground across Greece report that the overall conditions in detention for asylum seekers held for immigration reasons are poor. In Northern Greece, individuals held in detention centres in police stations are held in unsuitable cells, without adequate light, hygiene or toilet facilities. Cells are usually at capacity, and individuals often complain about the cleanliness of the conditions, including, for example, mattresses with fleas.<sup>5</sup>

An anonymous organisation provided the following account of conditions in the detention area “Section B”, in the Moria Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) on Lesbos in 2017, for detainees held under the ‘pilot program’ fast track deportation procedure, applicable to persons whose nationalities have low acceptance rates for asylum:

“...during visits to the detention facility we were consistently informed by persons being detained that they had not seen a lawyer and believed they did not have access to a lawyer. ...While details regarding the ‘pilot program’ are difficult to ascertain as this was not a formal procedure, it was a fast-track deportation program for persons who, based on nationality, had less than 1% acceptance rate for asylum. This mainly affected Algerian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi men. Due to restrictions in the capacity of detention (how many people could be detained) this program was seemingly applied arbitrarily. Through this program, persons affected were detained upon arrival in Greece for the duration of their asylum application. ...They were detained in the same areas with persons who were detained under criminal/antisocial charges and the conditions were generally poor. There was an epidemic of drug use and self harm in the detention facility, primarily among Algerians, and instances of violence. Access to psychological support and medical care was severely under resourced with only one nurse responsible for their care. When the nurse was not on shift, the administration of medication was the responsibility of the police officers on duty. We have second-hand accounts outlining how police would over administer medication, which exacerbated the drug addiction among detainees. Illicit drugs were also obtained by detainees through other means.”

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<sup>5</sup> Information provided by Elpida Home.

Ill-treatment in detention centres is widely reported<sup>6</sup>. Once inside the police station, there are reports of ill-treatment, ranging from beatings, standing on people's backs and heads, and aggressive behaviour. On the island of Samos, one asylum seeker claimed to have been kept handcuffed to a chair for a whole night, while others show signs of mistreatment, like handcuff marks and bruises from beatings<sup>7</sup>. Across mainland Greece and the islands, aid organisations and NGOs have stated that reports of ill-treatment by the police and in detention centres often go un-investigated, and that there is little to no redress available for the victims.

### III. Lack of legal safeguards

Aid groups and NGOs report that in most cases, detained individuals are unable to access a lawyer.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, access to legal aid is reportedly impossible in most cases. Often, the family of individuals in detention will resort to arranging a private lawyer. The practical difficulties in finding and accessing a lawyer often mean that individuals are not able to access the remedy of free appeal before the deadline of 48 hours after arrest. In addition, lawyers often struggle to contact their client, and police reportedly intervene in the communication between the individual and the lawyer. This means that they are often unable to report ill-treatment by police whilst in detention.<sup>9</sup>

As reported by the legal aid group Equal Rights Beyond Borders,

“in Chios detention center of the police department, the communication between the lawyer and the client takes place through the small window of the door of the detention area, and next to the lawyer, the policeman is supervising the whole visit. Rarely, and this is upon discretion of the police officer, the detainee is temporarily released to see the lawyer in the chairs of the corridor of the police department.”

Equal Rights Beyond Borders further reported that in the Alien's Department of Attica, all the information regarding the detention is retrieved by the lawyer via third parties. There is no access to a special meeting place for the lawyer and the detainee.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, they reported that in the pre-removal detention centre of Amygdaleza, an unaccompanied child who had a substance addiction was not seen by a medical doctor and had to endure withdrawal on his own for nine days. He was not able to access an interpreter in order to express his special needs and his will to claim asylum. As reported by Equal Rights Beyond Borders, he only managed to register for asylum as an

<sup>6</sup> See <https://dm-aegean.bordermonitoring.eu/2018/09/23/the-prison-within-the-prison-within-the-prison-the-detention-complex-of-moria-camp/> and <https://rm.coe.int/16808afaf6>

<sup>7</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

<sup>8</sup> In particular: in central Thessaloniki police station, Korydallos, Corinth, Mytilene police station & “section b” on Lesbos, Vathy police station & Vathy hotspot on Samos, the “hotspot” in Vial camp on Chios, the “hotspot” and police station on Leros and the “hotspot” and police station on Cos. Information provided by Advocates Abroad.

<sup>9</sup> Information provided by Equal Rights Beyond Borders.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

unaccompanied child after being allowed to contact his lawyer eight days after his arrest. Again, there was no interpreter available, and the lawyer and social worker were forced to bring their own in order to allow the child to access the procedure.<sup>11</sup>

Access to medical care in places of detention is in general extremely limited, and individuals report that they are often only given a paracetamol for a number of ailments. On Chios and on Samos, NGOs report that there is no doctor available to asylum seekers in the detention centres.

In another case, an asylum seeker whose claim was lodged and examined at the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) Chios was arrested for violating theft provisions (related to his drug addiction). The police department kept him detained, and he was later tried before the criminal court of Chios. He received a penalty of four years imprisonment without recognition of special instances or suspension of the execution and was transferred to the judicial prison of Kordalios. The police department gave no notification of these legal proceedings to the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) despite the fact that the asylum seeker had a valid asylum application card. Often, there is no notification of GAS in cases of imprisonment of applicants, which can lead to an issuance of an interruption of the asylum procedure. For almost two months, the person was considered disappeared by GAS and was not able to contact his lawyer. Eventually, he was reportedly allowed to make a phone call to his asylum lawyer after two months of detention. However, due to the lack of communication between the services, the lawyer found that all the deadlines for legal remedies were exhausted and was not able to appeal the conviction.<sup>12</sup>

Multiple aid groups report an alarming absence of available information on asylum procedures and rights in a language and format that asylum seekers can understand. In many cases, information is provided only in Greek<sup>13</sup>. On the island of Samos<sup>14</sup>, asylum seekers held in detention at Vathy police station reportedly did not know how long they were going to be detained, nor did they have access to a lawyer. A lack of translation services at police stations is reported across islands.<sup>15</sup>

During 2018, third country nationals who had crossed the land border in Evros<sup>16</sup>, mainly those from countries with 'low recognition' rates (but including families), were only provided access to register their intent to claim asylum after they had already been transferred from the RIC to the Pre-Removal Centre. However, this meant that they remained under active Deportation Orders, so a risk of direct or indirect refoulement was present (no guarantee against the enforcement of removal). These persons were also provided no proof of their expressed willingness to seek asylum. Lastly, the limitations on the maximum allowed period of detention do not begin counting until after the full registration of the claim - often well after an individual has already been detained. Without

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<sup>11</sup> Case study provided by Equal Rights Beyond Borders

<sup>12</sup> Case study provided by Equal Rights Beyond Borders

<sup>13</sup> Information provided by Elpida Home and Equal Rights Beyond Borders.

<sup>14</sup> Information provided from Still I Rise, based on observations from visiting Vathi police station between September 2017 to January 2018; Please see Annex A in this report for observations on detention conditions in Vathi police station on the island of Samos, written by a visiting lawyer who wishes to remain anonymous.

<sup>15</sup> Samos Volunteers and Equal Rights Beyond Borders

<sup>16</sup> Information provided by Human Rights 360.

adequate monitoring, these cases are not highlighted and addressed. Another routine practice observed by NGOs is that of asylum seekers being released straight from police detention facilities or the RIC after their initial registration, without referral through the proper channels to official accommodation sites – leaving those individuals without recourse to further humanitarian assistance, and vulnerable to exploitation. Aid groups have encountered such cases, which include Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASCs, sometimes referred to as Unaccompanied Minors or UAMs), who were released from police premises with a police note issued by the competent police authorities, but without having any registered asylum willingness number included therein.

As reported by Arsis, in the Fylakio RIC in Evros<sup>17</sup>, unrelated men and women, as well as adults and children, are all kept together in the same wings. Organisations have raised serious concerns regarding the risks of sexual and gender-based violence in the centres, as well as the heightened risk of exploitation and abuse of children in detention. In Samos, unaccompanied children are reportedly held in cells with adults<sup>18</sup>. In Chios, in the detention center of the police department (mostly administrative detention), men and women are not separated but the common practice of the police is to avoid detaining women. In the past years, children were also kept together with adults but now this practice seems to have been discontinued<sup>19</sup>. Additionally, the practice of detaining unaccompanied children for indefinite periods of time in so-called “protective custody” is still ongoing, concerns about which are expanded in more detail later in this report.

Samos Volunteers, a grassroots volunteer-based aid organisation, describes the conditions facing detained asylum seekers in the police cells in Vathy as follows:

“The station is extremely small, with only one big cell housing however many “inmates” are there at the moment. The state of the cell is bad: it has no beds [...], it is dirty, and it is not meant for medium term incarcerations, which means that people spending a week in it do not have their needs met whatsoever. They do not have any sort of translator, be it at the moment of imprisonment or throughout the person’s stay, so people often ignore why they’ve been incarcerated. There was a man that had been in the police station for five days, and neither him nor his family could understand why, as nobody spoke Farsi, and they didn’t speak any English.”

The conditions in detention facilities and treatment by police contribute to the already fragile mental health of the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Greece. In one particularly harrowing example, a visiting observer to Vathy police station on Samos found a detainee in the common hall, lying on a mattress with his legs sitting on the chairs and handcuffed to the chairs with both hands. The individual was showing signs of severe mental health distress. It is reported that this individual spent the weekend in this manner. It is not apparent why this individual was not taken to hospital.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Arsis

<sup>18</sup> Still I Rise

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Information provided by Still I Rise.

#### IV. Living Conditions for asylum Seekers and refugees

Living conditions for asylum seekers across Greece remain generally poor; for those living in hotspots on the islands the conditions are utterly unacceptable and are well below internationally recognised humanitarian standards. According to the data published by the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy, as of January 2019, all five RICs on the Greek islands were filled over their capacity, in some cases severely so:<sup>21</sup>

Location (RIC)	Capacity	Population
Lesvos (Moria)	3100	4956
Samos (Vathy)	648	3817
Chios (VIAL)	1014	1352
Kos (Pili)	836	816
Leros (Lepida)	1001	860

Following the implementation of the EU-Turkey Deal in 2016, the Greek islands have become increasingly overcrowded, while conditions have severely deteriorated, particularly on Lesvos, Samos, and Chios. In the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), or ‘hotspot,’ on Samos near the town of Vathy, the facility, which was initially built with a capacity for 648 people, now houses around 4000 asylum seekers<sup>22</sup>.

Samos Volunteers describes the conditions as “deplorable”. Due to the overcrowding in this former military barracks, converted to a reception centre in 2016, hundreds of asylum seekers - including single women and unaccompanied children - live outside of the camp perimeter on a steep slope which has become known as “The Jungle.” Upon arrival, asylum seekers are left to find their own accommodation, and many resort to living in the Jungle in cheap pop up tents or ad-hoc structures, with no access to sanitation facilities or electricity. The Jungle is highly insecure, particularly at night when there is no lighting and women do not leave their tents, even to relieve themselves, due to fears of assault. The lack of official appropriate accommodation has also led to a situation where there is an informal currency in living spaces within the camp, in which newly arrived asylum seekers often must ‘purchase’ space in another’s tent or container as their only option for accommodation. The “hotspot” is, under law, a closed facility, and people are supposed to be in detention for the first 25 days<sup>23</sup>. In reality, the hotspot’s gates are always open. However, NGOs are almost always denied entrance to the camp, and offers of material support are routinely denied: both small aid groups and international NGOs have been denied requests to enter the hotspot to distribute aid, carry out repairs, provide infrastructure improvements, or even to conduct vaccination campaigns. The only official detention centre on Samos is the Vathy police station, which is a five-minute drive from the

<sup>21</sup> [http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page\\_id=987](http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=987)

<sup>22</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers.

<sup>23</sup> Information provided by Samos Volunteers

camp. The station is extremely small, with only one big cell. Conditions in the cells are reportedly extremely poor and unclean, with detainees not provided even with beds<sup>24</sup>.

The following testimonies were provided to RRE in May 2019 from two Ghanaian asylum seekers on Samos:

“Dear Sir,

I write to bring to your notice about the problems we the refugees are facing at Samos camp. First and foremost, our living condition at the camp is very bad. Most of us live in the middle of the bush also we sleep in tents. The scary part of this unfortunate phenomenon is that, almost every day, we kill rats, snakes and other reptiles which harm us. A friend was biting [sic] by a scorpion quite recently [...] The food we eat at the camp is very bad. Many people complain of stomach upset after eating the food at the camp. We join long queue for food and even at times many people do not even get some food after joining that queue. I therefore take this opportunity to ask whether it is wrong to be a refugee? I therefore stand for all the refugees and plead on our behalf that the situation is getting worse everyday. We ask for your cooperation.”

“Firstly, one major problem is about food. To be fed even once a day is a big deal. It takes hours to just get fed once a day. The food is badly cooked, the queues are so long that sometimes it takes the whole day to get a loaf of bread. Due to this people need to enter the forests around and fetch firewood to be able to prepare their own foods. The bushes/forests are full of deadly animals. Only heaven can understand the trauma we go through to get fed [...] The problem of accommodation is pure jungle living. Refugees share their beds and clothes with snakes and rats and mice and legions of cockroaches. It leaks when it rains, and there’s no repairs and space problems. The last but not the lest [sic] is the problems of water and sanitation. It takes days to get shower. Walking to far away distances to fetch water is so hectic. People ease themselves anywhere [sic] because of latrine problems. There’s so much filth because of the problems of garbage collection.”

Issues with food provided in the hotspots are commonly reported. An unaccompanied child on Chios describes the food as following:<sup>25</sup>

“As far as food is concerned, minors eat the same food as the others at the camp. They are finished portions delivered in a plastic box. We always had to [wait] for our food to get. Most (hours) for breakfast, about two to three hours, and for the other meals, lunch and dinner, about an hour. The food quality is not good. More than once we found worms in the beans. Because the food was disgusting, I swear, it was disgusting, we never ate lunch and dinner before.”

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid

<sup>25</sup> Information provided by Equal Rights Beyond Borders

In Chios<sup>26</sup>, 2017, large numbers of people, including many families, were residing in small and fragile tents. Camps were so overcrowded that large numbers are forced to sleep in the streets or on the beach. This is a particular issue for new arrivals. In general, the living environment was unsanitary and dirty. Meanwhile, hot water is a rare currency for refugees in Chios. In Souda camp, hot water was only available for a few hours per day. The situation was particularly dire in Vial, as there was no water available in the toilets. In both Souda and Vial camps, refugees were provided readymade meals three times a day. Only those who are living in flats received money instead and could cook for themselves. Access to adequate food seemed to be a major problem in Chios. Spoiled food was commonplace, with many respondents reporting having suffered from food poisoning. One respondent mentioned having resided in the streets for approximately one month, during which time he was forced to eat food that he found or was given by passers-by.

In Lesvos<sup>27</sup>, 2018, overcrowding has become a severe and urgent issue, as a result of the containment policy on the island. People live in tents and shipping containers, lacking privacy and security. Overcrowding has also led people to pitch tents in other areas where they risk being bitten by reptiles. Access to water in the camp for bathing and using the toilets is limited. Despite new toilets having been installed one month prior to the research study, water in the toilets is cut off during the nighttime and for several hours in the afternoon, raising serious concerns regarding hygiene standards. The unsanitary conditions in the camps on Lesvos risk contributing to the spread of disease, inflammation, scabies and skin infections. A refugee who had been in Lesvos for more than seven months told researchers that he was only able to have a shower every 15-20 days.

In 2016, accommodation sites were rapidly opened across mainland Greece to accommodate the approximately 60,000 asylum seekers present in Greece subsequent to the closure of the Balkan Route in March 2016, including approximately 10,000 who were evacuated from the ad hoc camp at Idomeni in Northern Greece. According to eyewitness accounts, asylum seekers evacuated from Idomeni were brought to multiple sites around Thessaloniki which were former factories, warehouses, and industrial buildings: these included a former toilet paper factory and chicken processing plant. At Softex/Karamanlis camp, in Thessaloniki, asylum seekers were brought to a site at which tents had not been erected, and where there was not yet any drinking water available. An eyewitness from the Refugee Rights Europe team recounts the arrival of hundreds of asylum seekers brought on buses to Sindos, a former tannery in the industrial outskirts of Thessaloniki:

“Inside the darkened warehouse were rows of hundreds of filthy military tents, set up on the bare concrete which was thick with dust. There was water leaking through the ceiling and, which appeared to be crumbling asbestos tiles, and pooling on the floor. Outside, there was an open pit which was filled with metal debris, and aggressive pitbulls barking through the

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<sup>26</sup> Research conducted between 11-18 May 2018: [http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE\\_AnIslandAtBreakingPoint.pdf](http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_AnIslandAtBreakingPoint.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Research conducted between 18-22 June 2018: [http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RRE\\_AnIslandInDespair.pdf](http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/RRE_AnIslandInDespair.pdf)

chain link fence on the adjacent lot. There were two rows of chemical toilets erected outside, with sinks. However, one of the soldiers-who was wearing latex gloves and a surgical mask to receive refugees-commented that he thought the only potable water was from a single (unmarked) tap on the side of the building, which he said was groundwater. He could not confirm whether it had been tested. People arrived on buses to this place and refused to get off the bus. Women were crying, and screaming ‘we are not animals’”.

Based on field research at various locations in Greece, 2016<sup>28</sup>, RRE encountered generally inadequate living standards for asylum seekers on the mainland, while living conditions varied dramatically both between different camps, and within individual sites. More than a third, 39.3%, of respondents said their shelter leaked water when it rained. Across all camps studied, only 18% of respondents had access to a heater. The majority kept warm using clothing and blankets, which was a great concern to many as temperatures were plummeting in the run-up to winter. Additionally, only 26.6% said they had a secure lock on their shelter or room, which also gave rise to serious security concerns. Many camps featured problems with hygiene and sanitation. While the majority described toilet facilities in their camps as ‘OK’, some 19.7% described them as ‘very dirty’. Moreover, 28.6% said they did not have enough water to shower and wash. 58.5% did not have access to hot water, and 60.7% said reported they were unable to wash any time they wanted. In one of the larger camps, women respondents explained that there were too few showers for all the residents. The majority of respondents, 77.8%, were able to access a full meal three times a day. However, many described the food as extremely poor, sometimes “inedible”. During the research, some respondents reported being homeless on the streets of Athens. In light of the recent announcement by the Ministry of Migration Policy that it would begin imposing the six-month limit for those in receipt of ESTIA support, several NGOs have raised concerns that this is likely to lead to an increase in destitution among refugees in Greece<sup>29</sup>. Significant improvements were made to mainland sites over 2017 and 2018, with the replacement of tents with Isobox containers and the addition of amenities and infrastructure. However, the capacity of these sites remains limited. This has resulted in the highly unfortunate situation where vulnerable asylum seekers who have endured months (or potentially years) in condemnable conditions on the islands have been transferred into tents on the islands. As of June 2019, RRE is aware of at least three mainland sites where there are now hundreds of asylum seekers again housed in tents: Skaramangas, Nea Kavala, and Vagiochori.

## V. Police violence

Police violence against refugees and asylum seekers has been widely reported across Greece. On Samos, this violence appears to be so commonplace that Samos Volunteers comments that “There

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<sup>28</sup> Research conducted between 7-12 November 2016: [http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE\\_LifeInLimbo.pdf](http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_LifeInLimbo.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> [https://rsaegean.org/en/evictions-of-recognized-refugees-from-accommodation-will-lead-to-homelessness-and-destitution/?fbclid=IwAR3SQ\\_1KGclWQO4mZEMPP7wd7zjwJUNtjobSsabAiRiFL-tnroXb1qCrFPk](https://rsaegean.org/en/evictions-of-recognized-refugees-from-accommodation-will-lead-to-homelessness-and-destitution/?fbclid=IwAR3SQ_1KGclWQO4mZEMPP7wd7zjwJUNtjobSsabAiRiFL-tnroXb1qCrFPk)

are constant reports of ill-treatment by the police towards the asylum seekers. It has become par for the course on the island.” Another aid worker on Samos observes that “Everyone who goes through the police station on Samos is constantly yelled at and called [the pejorative term] ‘malaka’, at least.”<sup>30</sup> Refugees from African countries are reportedly treated with particularly brutal force by the police<sup>31</sup>.

On Samos, seven asylum seekers were arrested following peaceful demonstrations in January and February 2019.<sup>32</sup> In January, during a series of five days of peaceful demonstrations organised by the African community to ask for more fairness and speed regarding their asylum cases, the police closed off the exit points of the camp on the fifth day. The demonstrators marched to the camp management offices, at which point several were reportedly physically assaulted.<sup>33</sup> In another incident, Samos Volunteers reported that the police severely beat people who were restless while waiting in a distribution line for shoes and clothes.

As reported by Samos Volunteers:

“It is important to note that the riot police go up to the camp (in full gear), every day of the week, in order to intimidate people. Asylum seekers in line for food get beaten up with batons fairly regularly, including children and women. In one occasion I saw police beating two asylum seekers who were complaining and shouting “you are racist” because they were being evicted from their container so that another group of people could move in. They were beaten up, sent to court and spent three months in detention. Unaccompanied children have also been beaten up by police officers.”

Samos Volunteers also provided an alarming example of police violence against one individual during peaceful demonstrations in January and February 2019:

“One of our community volunteers, B (one of the leaders of the peaceful demonstrations), had his arm severely beaten by the police while he was peacefully trying to communicate with camp management about the dire situation in the camp. He was arrested days later (having only a first rejection and an appeal in place), quickly received a second rejection on his first day in jail, and got transferred to a deportation centre in Lesvos shortly after, where he was held for weeks with no information whatsoever on his case, waiting on a sort of limbo till the authorities decided his fate.”

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<sup>30</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers.

<sup>31</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

<sup>32</sup> Reported in Samos24: <https://www.samos24.gr/7-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BD%CE%B7-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%B9/>

<sup>33</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

There are several first-hand accounts from anonymous sources that on at least several occasions in the Moria hotspot, police officers enlisted Afghan asylum seekers to conduct crowd control during food distribution. They would instruct asylum seekers to arm themselves with metal poles or sticks and enforce order in return for faster asylum procedures and transfers to the mainland. Other reports on police violence include humiliation of asylum seekers where they were forced to strip naked during interrogations or interventions.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, actors on the ground report the regular use of chemical irritants during protests, use of chemical irritants in close quarters, regular intervention and excessive force used by riot police, arbitrary violence against asylum seekers regardless of whether they are active participants during the protest, violence against asylum seekers even after they have submitted to police or following their arrest, violence against unaccompanied children in the unaccompanied children's area, and negligence towards unaccompanied children during fires and arson attacks.<sup>35</sup>

In particular, aid organisations on Samos have reported that police are charging 50 euros in order to register complaints. Other anonymous sources have reported the same phenomenon on the mainland, but in the even higher amount of 100 euros. This means that refugees and asylum seekers, in particular vulnerable women and children, may be effectively barred from recourse to redress for crimes committed against them.<sup>36</sup>

## **VI. Violence against women**

The rate of gender-based violence against refugee and asylum seeking women and girls in Greece is alarming. In Moria on Lesbos, the situation is particularly acute, with ongoing reports of sexual assaults and serious abuse and exploitation of women and girls. On Samos, organisations on the ground also report that sometimes HIV tests and other critical aspects of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) including post-rape emergency care are unavailable, which means people who have been sexually assaulted (both before their arrival to Samos and on Samos) have no access to early detection, or to a proper examination<sup>37</sup>. Moreover, aid groups on Samos report that in order to report incidences of sexual assault and other gender-based violence, women need to file an official report with the police. However, often women do not feel comfortable or secure going to the police, and so these crimes often go unreported.

The RIC on Samos does not provide special protection provisions or infrastructure for women: often women are forced to live in makeshift shelters and tents in the camp, with only a padlock for security. There is only one unit of bathrooms (four cubicles) and showers (five cubicles) available

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Anonymous submissions from Lesbos

<sup>36</sup> This has been reported by Samos volunteers, Avocats Sans Frontières France and Berlin Law Clinic.

<sup>37</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

exclusively for women and it is placed in an area which is not properly lit and is on a muddy slope. Women must stand in lines for hours to receive food, which can often become chaotic and violent. Samos Volunteers reports that one woman broke her arm after being pushed over whilst standing in the food line.

In Samos, the camp management does not provide sanitary pads or diapers, meaning women and mothers have to buy these two very expensive items from their pockets (or from the 90 euros provided monthly through the ESTIA cash assistance program). Additionally, women are “not allowed” into most containers on the upper area of the camp (D8, D9, D10 for example), as these are controlled by men of different nationalities that do not accept women inside, limiting their access to safer bathrooms and showers. Women are not provided access to a female interpreter, and are often forced to retell their stories and do their interviews with a male audience, which enhances their vulnerable position.

Women moreover do not feel safe going to the toilet at night. One woman told aid workers:

“During the night we don’t have access to the toilets because many men are drinking alcohol on the way to the toilets and they bother us if we cross their ways. They would come to talk to us, saying come with me etc, they would touch us. So we give up and don’t go to toilets during the night anymore. In the container now I have a bottle to pee in if I need to go to the toilet during the night”<sup>38</sup>.

Similarly, at mainland camps in Northern Greece in 2016 and 2017, volunteers have reported that the lack of security was so acute that it was common for women and children not to leave their tents or containers at night to relieve themselves, due to fears of physical or sexual assault. Instead, they used adult incontinence pads overnight that were distributed by volunteer groups.

An additional barrier reported by organisations on the ground is the lack of capacity and professional expertise within existing national sexual and gender-based violence services to support the specific needs of refugee women. In one case, a woman residing in Koutsochero camp in mainland Greece and experiencing partner violence was assisted to leave the situation and was housed at a woman’s shelter in the nearby city. However, the shelter was only Greek speaking, and so after a few days the woman elected to return to the camp as she felt the abusive situation was still preferable to the isolation of the shelter.

Similar issues are reported on Samos, where volunteers report that as women who have reported sexual and gender based violence do not receive any protection support nor are offered alternative secure and safe accommodation, they typically choose simply to stay silent and are unable to escape abusive and exploitative situations.<sup>39</sup> Aid organisations working on the ground work tirelessly to support these women, but there appears to be little coordination amongst authorities to protect

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<sup>38</sup> Testimony recorded by Avocats Sans Frontières France and Berlin Law Clinic

<sup>39</sup> Information provided by Samos Volunteers

vulnerable women and girls across Greece. Due to the desperate conditions inside the camp on Samos, there are also reports of women and minor girls being forced into sex work.<sup>40</sup>

## VII. Unaccompanied children

The situation for unaccompanied children continues to be a serious source of concern in Greece. According to UNHCR statistics, as of April 2019 there are 3,817 UASCs in Greece, but only 1,121 places available in shelters and apartments as part of the Supported Independent Living Scheme for such children.<sup>41</sup> The poor overall living conditions for refugees in Greece – and the extended periods spent in waiting – are particularly unsuitable for children and there are a significant number of unaccompanied children in many camps, who are at heightened risk. In Chios, 50% of the children interviewed by RRE in May 2018 were unaccompanied, with 72.4% of all children reporting that they have family somewhere in Europe, meaning they may be eligible for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation. As of April 2019, the UNHCR reports a worrying 294 unaccompanied children living in the Moria RIC.<sup>42</sup>

A persistent issue reported by multiple rights groups<sup>43</sup> is the practice of placing unaccompanied children in so-called “protective custody.” ARSIS, a national child protection and advocacy organisation, reports on this issue as follows:

“in practice unaccompanied minors are put in protective custody in police stations and police detention facilities, spending up to two, and in some cases three months, in order to be placed in an appropriate shelter. For 2017, our professionals supported a total number of 353 minors in protective custody in the area of Thessaloniki only, while for 2018 this number reached 725 minors. Currently for this year we have supported 185 minors in those conditions. Hygiene conditions are extremely poor and the minors sleep in uncleaned beds and bedlinen, they are not provided with any non-food or clothing item, nor nutrition to live up to their development needs. There is no translator available by the police to explain to them basic procedures, and access to medical services is also periodic. These conditions were recently found by the European Court of Human Rights to be against Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.”

A recent case brought by the Greek Council of Refugees (GCR) to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) further highlights the severity of this issue. The case concerned two female unaccompanied children who sought legal and social assistance in January 2019, but who instead remained homeless and without the appointment of a legal guardian. Eventually, they were

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<sup>40</sup> Information provided by Still I Rise

<sup>41</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69780>

<sup>42</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69780>

<sup>43</sup> Human Rights 360 and Arsis

transferred to a detention facility for adult women, until, at the intervention of GCR, they were ordered to be transferred to an appropriate accommodation facility.<sup>44</sup>

Human Rights 360 reports that during 2018 at the Fylakio RIC in Evros<sup>45</sup>, the age assessment process continued to be challenging since almost all cases were referred for x-ray without any contact with the individual in question. Most of the time, the only criteria used in order to refer a child to the age assessment procedure was the personal and arbitrary decision of the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) officers, who determine age either by visual appearance in person or by looking at the person's registration picture. In these processes, Human Rights 360 found that there is typically a large margin of doubt and in a majority of cases (+50% of the cases), the decision found is that the individual is not a child. The referral to the age assessment procedure occurred even in specific cases where the person held a copy or carried a picture of an original document on their phone that proved them to be underage. This 'practice' raises serious problems. For example, there have even been cases where the RIC delivers an age assessment decision that recognizes a person as an adult whilst at the same time the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) issues a decision recognising the person as a child, by accepting the original birth certificate during the registration procedure. Moreover, there are often delays in this process, with possible significantly adverse impacts (i.e. referral to the Pre-Removal Centre of those deemed adults by virtue of the first decision, detention with adults, loss of timeframes, i.e. for Dublin III procedures). Regarding this practice, HumanRights360 recently filed an appeal against an age assessment decision. After the person's registration with the RAO of Fylakio, through presenting his original birth certificate, HumanRights360 succeeded in getting an order from the Prosecutor who decided to transfer the child back to the RIC under protective custody, preventing his further transfer to any other pre-removal center among adults. On the top of these activities, a complaint was filed to the Greek Ombudsman for Children against the differentiated practices, affecting the situation of persons whose age is disputed.

During 2018, Human Rights 360 observed that detention of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASCs) was systematically imposed and was prolonged for periods ranging from a few days to more than two months, pending their transfer to an accommodation facility. UASCs and other vulnerable persons were detained in both police stations and the RIC of Fylakio in so-called "protective custody"<sup>46</sup> in unacceptable detention conditions.<sup>47</sup> There is currently an unbearable situation for unaccompanied children, resulting from the directive whereby children must remain under "protective custody", combined with the delay in referrals to shelters or accommodation centres and the pausing of the guardianship procedure. In a large number of cases, including UASCs and

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<sup>44</sup> <https://www.gcr.gr/en/news/press-releases-announcements/item/1069-the-european-court-of-human-rights-grants-interim-measures-in-favour-of-two-detained-unaccompanied-girls>

<sup>45</sup> Information provided by Human Rights 360

<sup>46</sup> P.D.141/1991, art. 118.

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.ecre.org/greece-detention-remains-a-systematic-and-arbitrary-practice/>

other vulnerable persons, there are allegations of informal forcible removals (push-backs) from Greece to Turkey at the Evros river border.<sup>48</sup>

The situation is particularly serious in Moria on Lesbos, where children spend on average five months in the hotspot before they can move to the mainland.<sup>49</sup> There is an acute lack of available care, particularly mental health care, and there is an issue of pervasive substance use amongst children, who are often experiencing serious trauma.

An anonymous organisation describes the conditions for UASCs in Moria as such:

“The overall situation for unaccompanied minors is alarming. The living conditions in the shelters are substandard and supervision is minimal and not 24/7 (supervision even differs for the two children sections as they are coordinated by different organisations; a child in the one section may for example take a guardian to see a doctor until 11pm, whereas a child in the other section depends on the time a guardian works or decides to show up).

There is a huge shortage of capable caregivers (supervisors) for children. Up to mid-afternoon only two coordinators and two nurses (although this is on paper, the nurses of the sections often do not work on the times they should be working) are present for more than 300 children. Furthermore, only one psychologist is available. After the public officials leave, the police are the only point of contact for the children. Their presence causes fear among the traumatized youth. Many officers deal tactlessly and with disinterest with the youngsters. They do not speak their language and have no experience in dealing with trauma. We even see abuse of power.”

As reported by multiple organisations, the police do not appear to have sufficient (if any) safeguarding training for the care of vulnerable children and young people, nor is there availability of translators. One organisation has reported an alarming incident in which a child reported to the police that he had been sexually assaulted. In response, the police apparently went to the section where the children are housed and shouted “who raped this boy”, whilst pointing to the individual who had reported the crime.

Throughout Greece, a large number of incidences have been reported, in which authorities have failed to correctly register children at the outset of the asylum procedure. In an example provided by a legal aid organisation operating on one of the islands, a child declared his age as 17 years during his initial registration but was registered as an adult (he said ‘2002’; they reportedly wrote ‘2000’). He reportedly corrected them immediately, and was told ‘don’t worry, you tell them at your interview.’ Six months later, he still has not received an interview date and is living in the camp with

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<sup>48</sup> Information provided by Human Rights 360

<sup>49</sup> Information provided anonymously

adult males. He has reported multiple, repeated incidents of rape, and has not yet been given an appointment either for age determination or had a consultation. Furthermore, his asylum claim is based on a history of sexual abuse and violence. He has not been able to access any psychological support despite being clearly traumatised. Furthermore, his sexually-transmitted diseases and injuries as a result of ongoing sexual violence have remained untreated, despite him asking to see the camp doctor.

There are moreover multiple reports of children who are being housed as adults, and who are not provided safe or appropriate shelter. In a specific case from Moria, there was a child who was left sleeping rough in a forest in the Mytilene area following disciplinary action taken by the provider of the shelter where he had been accommodated. The child was told he was no longer welcome at the shelter, and was transferred to Moria by police. However, there were no arrangements made to receive him, and he was allocated to a shelter with adult men. Due to fear, he left Moria and took up camp in the forest in the Mytilene area with no sleeping bag or tent, sleeping in the forest for several days.

Equal Rights Beyond Borders provided a testimony from another unaccompanied child who was made homeless on Chios after his tent and belongings in the now defunct Souda camp on Chios were destroyed by police in 2017:

“In September, the other tents were destroyed in Souda. They told us to go to Vial. But there was no place in Vial. I told them, ok, I need a tent, they said, not our problem, go and find accommodation. So, on the street. But why on the road two hours from the city to sleep? This makes no difference. So I went to town to sleep on the street. I stayed for about a month.”

Organisations report that there is a chronic lack of appropriate accommodation for UASCs across Greece, which means many of them are forced to stay in the RIC on islands for extended periods of time. To illustrate this problem, at the time of writing, there is an unaccompanied child who has been on Samos for a year and five months. Even when transferred on to the mainland, some shelters have rules stating that if children are out of the shelter/hotel for over 24 hours they are not allowed back in again. This often leaves them homeless and there is no referral pathway or system for them to reach out and at least be put back on the shelter allocation system run by National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA Greece). In other cases, due to the lack of spaces available in shelters, children are simply transferred from the islands to so-called “safe zones” (often, just several designated containers) within accommodation centres on the mainland, many of which are located in remote areas and which may lack appropriate facilities for UASCs. In 2018 in Koutsochero camp near Larissa, children aged 16-17 were not able to access formal education, as it was not available for their age level.

According to reports from Samos Volunteers and Still I Rise, conditions for unaccompanied children on Samos are dire. In Samos, unaccompanied children are supposed to all live on ‘Level 2’, an area in the camp designated for them, and which is meant to be under 24/7 police supervision. In practice,

some children live on this level while many others live in other parts of the camp or even in “the Jungle.” Police often lock them in on Level 2 and leave. Sometimes they allow adults in to the area to charge their phones or shower. For over a year and a half, two out of the six containers allocated to children were completely uninhabitable but were not repaired or replaced, while the other four containers did not have doors or windows. It took RIS management more than one year and a half to make these repairs. In the summer of 2018, organisations on the ground report that UASCs were only given one litre of water per day. The whole level, or rather the whole camp, had been infested with vermin - rats and bed bugs - for at least a year and a half. At the end of 2017, NGOs offered to sanitise the camp and eradicate the vermin, but were refused by the camp manager.

During the winter of 2018-2019, there were approximately 300 unaccompanied children in the Samos RIC. Many lived in the forest and were not even provided with a tent on arrival. They had to buy it on their own. No clothes or NFIs were provided by RIS, only by EASO from December 2018 onwards. UASCs living on the level would sleep in shifts and on the floor, as around 25 children lived in a container meant for 8. They had no mattresses throughout the winter. Most of their containers were leaking water inside when it was raining. In November 2018, 22 unaccompanied minor girls resided in the Samos RIC, and they all lived in a half container in the police station area. Finally, it’s been a recurring issue that children who identify themselves as unaccompanied children to UNHCR on arrival are then registered as adults by Frontex and the police. As on the mainland, many of them have to then go through a lengthy age assessment process whilst they are treated by authorities as adults, which results in them staying in unsafe conditions on Samos for a longer period of time than necessary.<sup>50</sup>

## **VIII. Racial discrimination and xenophobia**

There has been a reported increase in hate crime incidents against refugees and asylum seekers in Greece<sup>51 52</sup>. In particular, there have been several incidences in which far right organisations have organised demonstrations against the refugee population on the islands, which have often turned violent, with reports of racist attacks. In Samos, there are reports of not only commonplace

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<sup>50</sup> Report provide by Samos Volunteers and Still I Rise

<sup>51</sup> HumanRights360 is an active member of the Racist Violence Recording Network and records incidents of hate crimes in the Evros region.

<sup>52</sup> Moreover, we have been witnessing the implementation of ΠΟΛ 1140/2018 issued by the Independent Authority for Public Revenue (Ανεξάρτητη Αρχή Δημοσίων Εσόδων) which mentions the procedure of the verification of authenticity of the International Protection Applicant Cards and the Residence Permit cards of recognized refugees. The public tax services send copies of these cards to the local asylum services, which need to formally respond for the authenticity of the document of the applicant who wishes to issue Tax number or TAXISNet codes. Despite the mediation and response of the Public Ombudsman, the above-mentioned procedure is still active with no alternative solutions to be given and resolve the issue. The consequences are the extreme delays of issuing AFM and TAXISNet codes (we have witnessed delays of four months) along with the loss of job offers that have been extended to some refugees/asylum seekers.

discrimination from shopkeepers refusing to serve asylum seekers, but also of severe racially motivated violence: “There are reports of a sort of “vigilante” group of locals following African refugees and beating them up in the late hours of the night (usually around 3am), in order to remain anonymous. We know of at least three cases of people suffering severe beatings by these kinds of groups.”

Organisations also report that across the islands, there has been an increase in reports of discrimination by locals against refugees, often refusing them entry to shops and cafes<sup>53</sup>. In other cases, refugees have been refused medical care, seemingly motivated by racist views. In one particular incident a pregnant woman went to visit the hospital on Samos, but was turned away by the midwife who reportedly told her that she “does not treat black people because they are too loud”.<sup>54</sup>

Moreover, according to reports, there might be particular discrimination and racist abuse towards asylum seekers from sub-Saharan Africa in Greece and on the islands. One refugee testifies that “There is [a lot of] discrimination in the camp and during the procedure. For example, only Arab and Afghan people have access to small containers; African people just have access to the big containers with 40 people inside - men and women. Somali men don’t have access to containers, they are only in tents”. Another refugee told aid workers that the “Police said ‘go back to Africa’”.

A Ghanaian asylum seeker on Samos provided the following testimony:

“Now talking about racism, I can testify to this myself. I once went to the hospital (emergency unit), but the doctor told me that us ‘blacks’ had nothing to add to their country, and at the end sacked me from the hospital. There is discrimination everywhere at the camp. At the hospital, at the asylum, at the canteen, etc.”

Racist abuse by police is commonly reported. Arsis reports that police “frequently” start racist discourses with their staff members in front of the unaccompanied children they are accompanying, particularly against Pakistani and Algerian children. Racism is also reported within the medical system. In a testimony provided to Equal Rights Beyond Borders, an unaccompanied child living on Chios from 2017 to 2018 said:

“Of course, the Greek population was always treated first [in the hospital], then the refugees, no matter how bad the situation was. There are two different queues in the hospital, one for refugees and one for Greeks. Some Greeks feel disgusted by refugees. They avoid sitting next to refugees and sometimes even leave the room.”

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<sup>53</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

<sup>54</sup> Anecdote provided by Avocats Sans Frontières France and Berlin Law Clinic

Similarly, there are issues related to racial discrimination and xenophobia within the context of children's access to education. Under Greek law, children have to meet two official requirements in order to go to school, both of which were met this year: a set of vaccinations, and an official address. In Samos, all children residing in the camp received vaccines (largely through a campaign by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), and the hotspot now has an official address. Despite the requirements being met, parents declared that they would not allow their children to be in the same class with refugees, that they "were dirty", "did not know where they came from", "did not know anything about their living conditions", all things that are not asked of Greek children going to school. Parents declared that they would physically not allow refugee children into school, and if they were to come in, they would forcibly remove them. As a result of these issues, there are only a handful of refugee children going to school, and around 14 of them have to attend school after hours, once the Greek children have left, in order not to interact with them, thus segregating the refugee community even more.

RRE's research on the Greek mainland has also highlighted that the education provided to children varied widely between different camps. A number of mothers said they chose not to send their children to school because of the embarrassment of not being able to clothe them properly. Others reported long waiting periods, or transport issues interfering with schooling. Meanwhile, service providers claimed that some children did not want to go to school or learn Greek because they were aiming to continue onto a different European country. By this token, researchers found that children in some camps were teaching themselves German. 56.7% of the child respondents in RRE's study said they did not have access to any form of education in Chios. 65.2% of child respondents said that they had access to educational opportunities in Lesvos.

Arsis also reported racist violence and discrimination directed against unaccompanied children, ranging from bus drivers refusing them entry, to a more extreme incident detailed as follows:

"In March 2019, there was a racist attack against a shelter where children were residing in Konitsa, Epirus. A group of far right extremists attacked the children with batons and knives, while they were doing sports and one child ended up hospitalised. ARSIS followed the procedures to press charges with the Public Prosecutor so that the perpetrators are identified and persecuted."

## **IX. Access to the asylum procedure**

RRE research conducted on the Greek islands in 2017 and 2018 indicated that there are a number of concerns regarding access to the asylum procedure and the length of time individuals are forced to wait to have their claim assessed, and therefore the impact on their ability to move off the islands.

In Chios in 2017, the situation was highly ambiguous, with people waiting without having any idea of what was going to happen to them, or whether and how their asylum case was being processed This

sense of hopelessness resulting from a widespread lack of transparency and information was commonplace among refugees in Chios. Many Syrian respondents reported that they were not provided with detailed reasons about why they were rejected - instead they were handed papers stating that Turkey would protect them. The lack of details on the grounds for rejection make appealing the case extremely difficult. Furthermore, there were very few organisations that had the capacity to provide guidance relating to the asylum process as well as advice and information. Grassroots initiatives are doing invaluable work alongside other charities on the island, but their resources and capacity are simply not sufficient for the current level of needs among refugees there. Indeed, 86% of respondents said that they had no access to information about their legal rights or opportunities to change their situation. Similarly, 78.3% reported that they had no access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Consequently, people live in complete uncertainty about their future, which appears to foster a strong sense of desperation and unnecessary frustration.

The situation was found to be similar on Lesbos. Whilst more than 68% of respondents had arrived in the Moria camp during 2018, there were actually ten respondents who had been there since December 2016 or for even longer. Almost all new arrivals appeared to have been told that they would have to wait until 2019 or even 2020 for an admissibility or vulnerability assessment. Aid organisations working on the ground also told researchers that even those who have been identified as vulnerable face a significant wait until they are transferred to the mainland. Moreover, those considered vulnerable are supposed to be moved to safe accommodation provided in Mytilene. However, RRE was led to understand that this accommodation was full, meaning that many vulnerable displaced people were left in unsafe conditions in Moria camp awaiting transfer.

Moreover, the process by which vulnerability assessments are conducted remains a source of serious concern. NGOs working on the ground and human rights groups have raised concerns regarding the significant delays to vulnerability assessments due to a lack of staff and expertise. In July 2017 on Lesbos, there were only seven vulnerability experts with a severe backlog and a three-month wait for an opinion<sup>55</sup>. Alarming reports indicate that vulnerabilities are often missed, with individuals going through the asylum procedure without having their vulnerability assessment completed first. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reported that, out of the total number referred to its clinic on Lesbos, almost 70% belonged to a vulnerable group that had not been recognised, including victims of sexual violence, torture or those with serious mental health disorders.<sup>56</sup>

Multiple legal aid organisations<sup>57</sup> operating on the ground similarly reported a large number of critical barriers to accessing the asylum procedure in Greece, including systemic structural problems,

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<sup>55</sup> [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/aida\\_vulnerability\\_in\\_asylum\\_procedures.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/aida_vulnerability_in_asylum_procedures.pdf)

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.asylumineurope.org/reports/country/greece/asylum-procedure/guarantees-vulnerable-groups/identification>

<sup>57</sup> Mobile Info Team, Advocates Abroad, Equal Rights Beyond Borders, Avocats Sans Frontières France, Berlin Law Clinic

administrative errors, severe delays and backlogs, a lack of access to legal aid and what appeared to be a lack of coordination between Greek Asylum Service (GAS) and EASO.

Waiting times for initial asylum interviews can be extensive throughout Greece, with different waiting times seemingly dependent on the nationality of the individual:

- Interview appointments from the RAO Thessaloniki that are scheduled for 2023 (especially for Kurdish applicants)<sup>58</sup>. Other nationals normally receive an interview date in 2021, which also means a waiting time of two years.
- Interviews for Syrian applicants in the so-called fast track unit for international protection in Athens are currently scheduled for 2021.
- Interviews for Turkish asylum seekers with the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) Attika are currently scheduled for 2025.
- Turkish asylum seekers do not have to pre-register via Skype. However, in Athens, Turkish applicants have to give their phone number to RAO Attika and will be contacted, often after months.
- Refugees arriving on Lesbos will not receive an interview until early 2020.
- On Samos people reportedly are being told they will have to wait until 2022 for an interview<sup>59</sup>.

Not being registered leads to exclusion of access to health care and cash assistance as well as to the risk of being returned. In addition, long waiting times mean that refugees and displaced people are left in potentially harmful situations in poor and overcrowded conditions on the islands and the mainland.

As well as long waiting periods for an initial asylum interview, almost one out of three applications in Greece is pending for more than six months<sup>60</sup>, according to the Greek Council for Refugees. An illustrative example is S, an applicant from Uganda, considered vulnerable under Greek Law by KEELPNO. S applied for international protection at the end of 2018 and is scheduled to be interviewed in February 2021, more than 25 months after his registration. Another example is F, an applicant from Iran who has been on Samos for more than eight months. His interview at the

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<sup>58</sup> Mobile Info Team

<sup>59</sup> Information provided by Avocat Sans Frontières and Berlin Law Clinic

<sup>60</sup> With regard to waiting times, Greek law states that an examination of an application needs to be concluded within six months. Making a decision regarding the application could be extended to nine months if the case is complex, in fact and law, or when the applicant is not complying with their obligations under Greek law such as compliance with, and appearance before, the competent authority. Another reason for extending the conclusion of the examination under Greek law is the influx of large numbers of aliens or stateless persons simultaneously applying for international protection, though no threshold is provided for what is considered to be large numbers. In addition, on top of the nine months extension, three months can be added when there are exceptional circumstances. Greek law thus states that the Greek Asylum Service needs to take a decision on any application within a maximum of eighteen months, provided that extending the decision beyond six months is only implemented for problematic cases or under exceptional circumstances.

beginning of February 2019 was postponed without any stated reason or a new interview being scheduled.

A major and persistent issue is the so-called 'Skype procedure' for initial asylum registration on the mainland. For several years now, the only route available to those arriving in Greece through mainland routes (i.e. not via the islands, where there is a separate process) to register as an asylum seeker and to obtain an interview date is to contact the GAS over Skype.<sup>61</sup> This service is currently available in 13 different languages, and an asylum seeker must use their own Skype account to call the correct GAS Skype ID matching their language, within a narrow time slot provided in a weekly schedule which changes regularly.<sup>62</sup> As, at any given time, there may be dozens or hundreds of, for example, Arabic speaking asylum seekers attempting to call the single Arabic GAS Skype line within the designated Arabic weekly time slot, it is not unusual for asylum seekers to call the line every week for months in frustration and never be able to get through. As a result, asylum seekers will often have their police notes expire before they are able to register themselves through Skype, lose their access to humanitarian assistance, and risk detention. In their 2018 report on administrative detention practices, the Greek Council for Refugees found that, as in previous years, they encountered multiple cases of individuals who had been arrested due to lack of documentation after repeated unsuccessful attempts to make an appointment via Skype with the Asylum Service.

A corollary issue is the structural discrimination built into the Skype system by offering the service only in 13 languages (as of June 2019, these are: English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Kurmanji, Sorani, Pashto, Albanian, Bengali, Hindi, Georgian, Russian and Ukrainian) which blocks those who do not speak one of the designated languages from clear routes to accessing asylum. In one 2018 case reported by an anonymous aid worker in Koutsochero camp in mainland Greece, a Somali speaking man had resided in the camp for four months and had not yet been able to register as an asylum seeker as Skype is not offered in Somali, nor had he been able to access assistance from either the UNHCR or camp authorities, as he was unable to communicate with them. The man was eventually instructed by the SMS agency on site to travel to the asylum office in Athens and present himself in person to register. However, upon arrival at the GAS office, the man was repeatedly turned away, and after several days of sleeping on the street, he returned to the camp (at his own expense) only to find that as he had been absent he had been de-registered and had lost his accommodation status as a resident, which had the corollary effect of also removing him from the cash assistance programme.

Some of the languages which are offered by GAS are more difficult to get through to than others. Mobile Info Team reports that it is particularly difficult for Urdu speakers to get an answer on the Urdu line, with individuals routinely waiting to get through for six months or more<sup>63</sup>. In practice, the only realistic possibility for many Urdu speakers to successfully apply for asylum is reportedly to either show up at the RAO nearly every morning, hoping that one day there will be a spontaneous

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<sup>61</sup> See <https://www.mobileinfoteam.org/skype> for a more detailed description of the process

<sup>62</sup> [http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page\\_id=987](http://asylo.gov.gr/en/?page_id=987)

<sup>63</sup> Ibid

free registration slot for them (which is rare, as vulnerable individuals or nationals of countries with higher acceptance rates are preferred for these slots), or to get arrested after their police note expires and to apply from the detention or pre-removal centre.

In Northern Greece (in the jurisdiction of the Regional Asylum Office (RAO) of Thessaloniki), there is a pilot project, in which third country nationals wishing to apply for asylum and staying in a camp don't have to pre-register through Skype anymore, but can express their willingness of applying to the Reception and Identification Service (RIS) in the camp. Lists with the potential applicants are then forwarded to the RAO Thessaloniki. However, waiting times are still extensive. The standard waiting time is at least three months. Aid group Mobile Info Team have met multiple cases that are waiting or waited for six months and more to receive an appointment for registration after expressing their willingness to the RIS. This is especially problematic when people with chronic diseases are involved, as it is not possible to receive a Greek Social Security Number (AMKA) without being in the possession of an International Protection Applicants Card ("white card"). Without the AMKA, free medical treatment is only possible in case of emergency. Within the context of the new eligibility rules for the cash assistance, a white card is also mandatory to receive cash assistance. In general, the pilot of the RAO Thessaloniki is definitely a step forward, compared to the Skype system. However, if the RAO Thessaloniki doesn't have enough staff to process registrations in a timely manner, there remain significant issues<sup>64</sup>.

Procedures within the hotspots on the islands are notoriously complex and constantly changing, with even 'official' actors on the island confused as to each other's respective roles and responsibilities. There is a persistent lack of communication between different authorities, for example between KEELPNO and GAS, regarding vulnerability assessment dates.

Moreover, interview dates change all the time. Interviews are sometimes cancelled at the last minute, and when this occurs, the asylum seeker is not immediately informed of a new date. S/he is only told that s/he has to wait to be called to receive a new interview date. As reported by Samos Volunteers, this has a profound effect on the mental state of the people in the camp, generating a lot of stress and anxiety as they are waiting every day to be called without knowing if they have to wait for a few days or for several months.

On Samos, organisations providing legal aid are often prohibited from entering the camp, making it difficult to accompany clients to their interview, as the GAS office is located inside the RIC on the island. Access is often denied for counsellors to attend the personal interview, in contravention of Greek national law. There are also significant capacity issues for legal organisations working in Greece to support asylum applicants, meaning that many are not able to lodge appeals within the specified time frame.<sup>65</sup>

There are reports that on Samos, the GAS no longer provides asylum seekers with the transcript for their interview because they claim that they do not have the paper to print it on. Asylum seekers are

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<sup>64</sup> Information provided by Mobile Info Team

<sup>65</sup> Information provided by Samos Volunteers

told to ask their lawyer to request the transcript. Those without a lawyer approach local NGOs who do often do not have the capacity or resources to print all the transcripts<sup>66</sup>.

Moreover, aid organisations and NGOs report that since March/April 2018, asylum seekers no longer receive a convocation paper, but only receive the interview date on their IP card. In one example, a man who was tortured in his home country and arrived in Greece in November 2018 is still waiting for an interview and has not had access to any medical or psychological support. He suffers from vertigo as a result of head injuries from acts of torture, and finds it difficult to stand up. He came for a meeting in the legal centre to ask about his procedure, and told Samos Volunteers:

“I stay in bed in my tent all day every day. It has been a month since I have left the camp. The only reason I got up today was because we had a meeting, otherwise I would have just stayed in the tent. Really, they are torturing us here.”<sup>67</sup>

## **X. Push Backs**

Since at least 2018, in a number of cases including UASCs and other vulnerable persons, there have been allegations of informal forcible removals (pushbacks) of foreign nationals from Greece to Turkey at the Evros river border. The persons who alleged that they had been pushed back from Greece to Turkey had again entered Greek territory and had subsequently been apprehended by the Greek police. This new status quo in the Evros region is illustrated by a report published by HumanRights360 in coordination with Greek Council for Refugees and ARSIS-Association for the Social Support of Youth<sup>68</sup>. Testimonies in this report substantiate a continuous and uninterrupted use of the illegal practice of pushbacks. These testimonies as documented in the report were also sent to the Network for Children on The Move under the mandate of the Ombudsman for Minors, and to the Greek Ombudsman. These reports reveal an alarming array of practices and patterns calling for further investigation: the persons involved in implementing the practice of pushbacks are reported to speak Greek and wear either police or military clothing, and they often employ violence. The practice is a threat for the rule of law in the country. Following the report on pushbacks, the Prosecutor of Orestiada has begun a preliminary investigation into the pushback allegations.

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.humanrights360.org/the-new-normality-continuous-push-backs-of-third-country-nationals-on-the-evros-river/>

## **XI. The situation of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers**

As reported by Avocats Sans Frontières France and Berlin Law Clinic, LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers are in a particularly precarious situation<sup>69</sup>: they risk being threatened and intimidated by other people in the camp, they need to hide, and they do not have any space to retreat. One person reported that they were targeted due to their sexual orientation, and were beaten up by a group of other asylum seekers, spending days in hospital. The person wished to report this to the police, but the police informed them that they would charge a fee of 50 euros to file a complaint; a price the victim could not afford. In another case, an asylum seeker tried to report to the police that others had abused them in the camp stubbing out cigarettes on their body. The police refused to accept the complaint unless it was in Greek, and provided no interpretation.

### **Lack of access to health care**

Health issues and limited access to healthcare are major challenges for refugees living in mainland Greece, with many reporting they experience constant health problems. In total, 73% of respondents had experienced health problems during their time in the camp<sup>70</sup>; the majority due to the spread of contagious diseases, unhygienic conditions inside the camps, or a lack of effective treatment for chronic diseases or existing health issues. Meanwhile, a striking 20.1% of those who had experienced health problems reported that this was due to poor mental health or emotional wellbeing. In total, 79.4% of those who had experienced health problems sought medical help - in most cases offered by international NGOs inside the camps or by the Greek hospitals through referral from the camp doctor. Of those with experience of healthcare, 51.9% rated it as 'OK', while 26.26% described it as either 'bad' or 'very bad'. A lack of medical supplies and treatment was among the biggest concerns to camp residents. Respondents explained that paracetamol was prescribed to treat most medical concerns. The number of doctors and their reception hours were also perceived as inadequate. Another issue creating barriers to healthcare was a lack of translation services, which in many cases caused delays to treatment and created unnecessary frustration.

On the island of Chios, in 2017, 71.3% said they had experienced health problems since arriving in Chios. While all emergency care can be obtained from the local hospital free of charge, less than a third (28.5%) of those people with a health condition had been able to access medical care. The figure was even higher for women, with a whole 94.3% reporting they experienced health issues in Chios. Less than a third (30.3%) of these women had been able to access medical care. While 37.1% said they had suffered from a common health problem that could happen anywhere, 40.8% said it had started due to the unhealthy environment in the camp. Alarming, 31% described their health problem as a mental health issue rather than a physical ailment. Indeed, it became evident through the study that incidents of mental ill-health were widespread, with many respondents considering self-harm and substance abuse.

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<sup>69</sup> Information provided by Avocats Sans Frontières France and Berlin Law Clinic

<sup>70</sup> [http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE\\_LifeInLimbo.pdf](http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/RRE_LifeInLimbo.pdf)

On Lesbos, the vast majority of respondents had experienced a health problem; only 13.8% said that they had remained healthy whilst on the island. 57.1% of those who reported health problems believed that these had been brought on by the unhealthy camp environment, and an alarming 61.1% of those with a health problem said that they had not received medical care. There are significant obstacles preventing people from accessing medical care. Medical treatment from the hospital of Mytilene has to be paid for by residents, as well as the transport to get there, which makes it inaccessible for many. Of the 86.2% who reported experiencing a health problem since arriving on the island, 45.9% stated that their health concern was a mental health problem, as opposed to a physical ailment. The extreme and worsening conditions on the island, and the length of time spent there, appear to have contributed to an exacerbation of mental health concerns among camp residents. Indeed, many respondents appeared to suffer from severe depression and some expressed suicidal thoughts.

Similarly, in Samos, people are often unable to access a doctor, as the medical team available for refugees on Samos is critically understaffed<sup>71</sup>. With only one doctor in the hotspot (who is also in charge of assessing vulnerability for the asylum process), people are typically unable to access medical attention unless it's an emergency. The responsible medical actor, Hellenic Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (KEELPNO) has only one doctor, specialised in triage, stationed on Samos, cooperating for diagnoses with an outdated and understaffed hospital, which only has the capacity for the small local island population. The same applies to psychosocial support<sup>72</sup>. The RIC on Samos only has one psychologist for a population of approximately 4,000 people, and the waiting list for access to psychological care is around two months. Sometimes, sexual assault victims have been unable to get an HIV test simply because the hospital had ran out of supplies to perform these tests<sup>73</sup>.

A, an applicant from Cameroon who identifies as homosexual, disclosed that he had been gang-raped in his country of origin. He lives in uncertainty about his HIV status, which if contracted could be grounds for the GAS to acknowledge vulnerability and is therefore critically important to his potential legal status in Greece. Another example is H, an Iraqi national, for whom another NGO, providing medical support, stated in September 2018 that immediate psychological support was needed, because H had suicidal thoughts. Only after an organisation working on the ground used its (informal) connections with KEELPNO was it possible to arrange an appointment for H with a psychologist after more than 1.5 months. Organisations working on the ground report that in most cases, unless it is an emergency, the police will not notice medical needs<sup>74</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Information provided by Samos volunteers

<sup>72</sup> Information provided by Samos Volunteers

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Ibid

Racial discrimination within the medical system is also an issue. As reported by Samos Volunteers:

“The hospital staff discriminates on racial on a daily basis, from not seeing patients, to declaring they are “too dirty”, to inappropriate treatment of patients. We have frequently had to go to the hospital with our beneficiaries, as they are denied assistance if they are not with a “white person”, and even then they have tried to refuse to see them... Another of our community volunteers, with a pre-existing heart condition, was denied assistance twice...Furthermore, the hospital does not offer any help regarding medical papers or acquiring medicine, and usually tells refugees they have simply “run out”. Asylum seekers are expected to buy antibiotics and expensive medicine out of their own pockets...”

The following testimonies was provided to RRE in May 2019 from two Ghanaian asylum seekers living on Samos:

“There’s a major healthcare problem. Before I start there is only one doctor here, when he can. Seeing a doctor is tougher than going to space. Therefore, nothing like first aid. Serious problems are taken care by a private hospital. It’s pathetic to see people in the camp who need immediate medical attention. Again, getting your police papers is more treacherous than death. Refugees form queues in the skin bleaching sunlight or the rain for days to get it done.”

“It is very pathetic to notice a situation at the camp where over three thousand refugees are being taking care of only one doctor. How can this help us? This doctor doesn’t come to work always, even if we are lucky for him to come to work a day, he works for few hours. The situation here is very appalling because the clinic at the camp does not work on weekends. Just imagine in case something happened to us on weekends?”

The following testimony was recorded by Equal Rights Beyond Borders, from an unaccompanied child who lived in the VIAL hotspot on Chios from 2017-2018:

“Many of the minors also had razor blades to cut themselves. This was also because many of them wanted to talk to a psychologist but were rejected. The procedure for talking to a psychologist was as follows for minors: you cut yourself. After that they take you to the hospital to be sewn. Then comes the police and brings you to jail for two or three days. Then you can go to a psychologist and they make many promises to move you and get you out of the camp. But that usually does not happen, it’s promises [...] Whatever illness you have, they will give you Panadol, a painkiller. For everything, headache, fever, cancer, Panadol [...] There was no procedure to go to the hospital or to see a doctor. The procedure was: Wait until the minor is about to die and then they put him in a police bus to take him to the hospital. If you are in the hospital, they will treat you at some point. But it was very difficult alone. Sometimes, volunteers from an independent NGO accompanied us to the hospital. They always fought with the hospital so we could see a doctor. It was very difficult.”

## **XII. Annexes**

### **a. Observations by lawyer upon visiting Vathi police station on Samos**

- The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (known as CPT) has established a number of minimum standards in relation to detention (<https://rm.coe.int/16806cc449>). According to the CPT, the minimum standard for personal living space in prison establishments is: 4m<sup>2</sup> per prisoner (plus fully partitioned sanitary facility) in a multiple-occupancy cell. In addition, according to caselaw from the European Court of Human Rights, cells offering less than 3m<sup>2</sup> of personal living space to each occupant give rise to a strong (albeit still rebuttable) presumption of a violation of Article 3 of the ECHR (inhuman and degrading treatment). Note that even a living space exceeding this threshold may be considered insufficient, taking into account all other relevant elements (such as the time that the inmates spend in their cell every day, their access to natural light and air when in the cell, and the overall condition of the cell).
- The cell I saw (there are 2 at the detention facility) measured around 3 metres by 2.75 metres (an estimate based on a similar sized room I have seen - I am working on a better estimate); plus there were 7 occupants yesterday and I am informed that there are usually around 15. So, that's a total of 8.25m<sup>2</sup> for 7 or 15 occupants, which works out to 1.17m<sup>2</sup> or 0.55 m<sup>2</sup> per prisoner. This is far below the minimum standard required by the CPT and gives rise to a strong presumption of the occupants being subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. I also do not think that there is a fully partitioned sanitary facility, although I am investigating that.
- I would observe that, in relation to the other factors that should be considered - inmates do not spend any time out of their cell during the day (the CPT refers to a minimum of 1hr per day out of the cell); - the inmates are not getting natural light, because of the above. In addition, the cell is dark, containing two covered(?) windows that have bars. The cell has bars between it and the corridor, and the corridor has windows that open out on to a courtyard. That is the only other distant light source; - for the same reason, there is limited natural air (the cell windows did not appear to open); - the inmates are sleeping on a hard floor with bedding, next to each other
- The purpose of the facility is not clear to me or, more importantly, its occupants. Is it a pre-removal detention facility? One person explained that they have lodged an appeal against their second rejection. So removal is not imminent as yet. Another person does not know why he is in there. It is a basic principle of the ECHR that you are informed of the reasons for your detention.
- I note that GCR in a 2016 report highlighted serious concerns raised by the CPT and other bodies about conditions for asylum seekers in Greece. I also note that the Greek Ombudsman has raised concerns (on another note I think it is the Ombudsman we should be complaining to about police assaults etc). See this report at p.131 onwards: [http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/reportdownload/aida\\_gr\\_2016update.pdf](http://www.asylumineurope.org/sites/default/files/reportdownload/aida_gr_2016update.pdf)

