



Tents in the Lesvos "Temporary" Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), where unrelated families share the same tents and sleep on the floor, August 2021, Picture taken by a camp resident.

LEGAL CENTRE LESVOS QUARTERLY REPORT: JULY – SEPTEMBER 2021



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(1) Living conditions

- *August 2021 - The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) persistently recognises Greek authorities' disregard for migrants' health and lives in Lesvos RIC*

Over the summer, the Legal Centre Lesvos (LCL) continued to seek redress before the ECtHR for people forced to live in the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) in Kara Tepe, Lesvos (also known as Mavrovouni RIC or Moria 2.0), despite their critical state of health.

Between July and September, LCL submitted 9 applications for interim measures to the ECtHR **requesting the urgent transfer of individuals and their families out of the Lesvos' RIC into safer accommodation and their immediate access to urgently needed health care on mainland Greece**. In 8 of these cases, the **ECtHR granted an interim measure within 48 hours of submission**, instructing Greece to fulfill its obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and ensure that the applicants' living conditions be compatible with Article 3 ECHR, the prohibition on torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, and to provide them with adequate healthcare, having regard to their state of health. In response to the ninth case, the Court ultimately refused the interim measure, as Greece scheduled the individual's transfer to Athens while the case was pending.

These applications for interim measures followed **months of inaction by the Greek authorities and fruitless communication between LCL and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Head of Lesvos' Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), and the Vulnerability Focal Point (VFP) of the Lesvos RIC** – all of whom are responsible for the identification and transfer outside of the camp of people with vulnerabilities and specific medical needs as provided under Greek law.

Those applications also constitute **another damning indictment on the immiserating reception conditions imposed on migrants effectively contained in the RIC of Lesvos** and a reiterated recognition by the ECtHR that people with severe health situations left to live there for months without attention are at imminent risk of irreparable harm. This cruel and unfair policy prioritises immigration control and containment of migrants over all else, irrespective of the severity of people's medical conditions. It also **ignores the fact that a person's right to health and life are fundamental rights that must be guaranteed for all, regardless of legal status**.

Out of the total of eight applications granted by the ECtHR between July and September, five applicants were officially transferred out of the RIC of Lesbos with their close relatives by the Greek authorities. Two applicants are still awaiting their transfer to Athens and one family decided to leave the island on their own.

Since filing this latest set of interim measure applications, LCL observed a shift in the Greek authorities' policy who started to allow individuals with severe medical conditions to leave the island by their own means, if those individuals are able to show medical documentation referring them for treatment unavailable on Lesbos and obtain permission to leave the island from the Greek police – regardless of their legal status. Although this **unofficial decongestion** is an improvement, it is not being applied in a consistent manner, with many still denied permission to leave the island despite being issued with medical documents from the General Hospital of Mytilene recommending transfer to and treatment on the mainland.

Moreover, these are not 'official' transfers and do not ensure that vulnerable people will ultimately access safe accommodation or health care on the mainland. For many, this could result in homelessness, destitution and continued lack of access to medical treatment. This also means that only those people who have the financial means and are in a physical and psychological state allowing them to move and travel can risk leaving the island on their own. Consequently, the approximately 3, 500 people who are currently stuck in Lesbos RIC are increasingly those whose personal situation makes it difficult for them to travel easily - for example because they have physical disabilities, are older, have large families or do not have the financial means to support themselves.

The situations of the people LCL has represented before the ECtHR are unfortunately not unique, but illustrative of the dire situation faced by everyone trapped in the detention-like conditions of Lesbos RIC and on Lesbos in general.

For more information read the full report [here](#).



Inside a tent of the Lesvos Reception and Identification Centre, August 2021. Picture taken by a camp resident.

➤ ***September 2021 - One year after the Moria fires: No lessons learnt and no responsibility taken***

September 2021 marked the “anniversary” of one year after the fires that destroyed the infamous Moria hotspot camp in Lesvos, and the various political promises that followed – including that there would be “No more Morias”. Instead, the immiserating living conditions forced on migrants arriving to Lesvos continue as before, if not worse, in the “temporary” RIC of Lesvos (see below).

The EU and Greek authorities have failed to recognise their clear responsibility for the creation, extension and ultimate destruction of the deadly hotspot camp of Moria. Rather than recognising that the fires of Moria were the inevitable product of the hotspot approach and its deadly camp infrastructures which should – in no circumstances – be reproduced, the Greek authorities have continued to concentrate their efforts on the progressive closure of all existing alternative and safe accommodations available in Lesvos, including for minors, families and people with vulnerabilities or medical conditions.

In September of 2020, the Greek state arrested six young Afghan migrants, most of whom were minors, presenting them as the sole culprits of the fires. All were unsurprisingly condemned to long prison sentences without recognition of any mitigating factors, after undergoing unfair and unjust trials, reinforcing the impression of a premeditated decision.

In the meantime, there has been no justice for most of the families of those who died within the camp in five years of operation of Moria RIC, or for the tens of thousands of people subjected to the camp's institutional disregard for their lives. There has been no redress for those whose health deteriorated due to their prolonged containment in inhumane and unsanitary conditions; for those who were subjected to violence, insecurity, sexual and other forms of abuse; for the children denied access to education, safe shelter, or adequate nutrition, refused access to support, or otherwise left to fend for themselves; for those who still live with the post-traumatic disorders resulting from their containment in this hell on earth. There has been no recognition, by responsible authorities, of their role in causing and compounding the trauma of those already subjected to persecution and insecurity, of their deliberate subjection of thousands of people to torturous and degrading treatment to serve the sole purpose of upholding Europe's violent borders.

Quite the opposite: "no more Morias," as expected, was an empty promise. Far from reconsidering the containment approach and the confinement of people to camps on the islands, Greece and the European Union (EU) have agreed the extension and entrenchment of this deadly model through the construction of new closed "multi-purpose" camps on the Eastern Aegean islands, which the Greek Government proudly presents as a big achievement, and where migrants will be concentrated in the future. The construction of these camps continues Greek and European authorities' violent crimes towards migrants, intertwined with their practices of expulsion, deportation, and externalisation. But the Moria fires one year ago demonstrated that these policies are doomed to failure, and will inevitably meet the same result.

For more details read our full [publication](#).



Picture of the Lesvos Reception and Identification Centre taken from a hill, showing tents by the sea and the ongoing and constant re-construction work behind the barbed wire fences, August 2021. Credits: Fellipe Lopes.

➤ *September 2021 - One year of Moria 2.0: When the temporary becomes permanent*

The anniversary of the Moria fires also marks the first year of existence of Lesvos “temporary” RIC, hastily established in Kara Tepe in September 2020 on land that was leased for five years, calling in to question the camp’s alleged temporariness (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Since then, the “temporary” RIC (also known as Mavrovouni camp) has seen **constant construction works**, despite knowledge that the site is contaminated with lead which therefore poses an acute health risk to all contained there. Some families told the Legal Centre Lesvos that they **were forcibly moved from their tents or containers, at least once per month**, due to the constant and disorientating re-shaping of the camp’s infrastructure. They also complained about the frequent **presence** of dust in the air created by the permanent construction works and movement of trucks passing through the camp, which also contaminates their food and water.

Mavrovouni’s neatly aligned rows of nearly 500 UNHCR-branded tents, containers, and rub-halls might appear, at first glance, better organised than the olive groves that sprawled around the former Moria RIC. But this image, satisfactory only for politicians’ brief visits or organisations’ promotional videos, belies a fundamentally different reality: the effective detention of migrants in shelters battered by extreme weather

conditions, with scarce and inaccessible sanitation facilities, and under ever-increasing police surveillance – yet facing chronic insecurity.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, residents of Mavrovouni RIC (and other camps across Greece) have been subjected to disproportionate and discriminatory restrictions such as curfews, restricted number of exits per week, and ongoing movement certification requirements. In August, exit and entrance restrictions were finally lifted for the Mavrovouni camp residents, but every person leaving the camp was forced to undergo a rapid COVID test each time they want to leave – even vaccinated persons who could present a COVID vaccine certificate.

Since 11 September however, harsh police controls and movement restrictions have been reimposed under the justification of “protection measures of public health from the spread of COVID-19”, whereas the rest of the local population on the island is not subjected to any restriction – let alone an enhanced restriction – through the end of September 2021. As a consequence, the camp management has resumed the publication of daily notices listing residents’ file numbers, which allow camp residents to leave the camp only once per week “for the cover of basic needs”, with the exception of scheduled and documented appointments – such as medical appointments, asylum interviews, appointment with lawyers or public services. **This means that with the exception of less than a month in August 2021, residents of Lesbos’ RICs have been in *de facto* detention since March 2020.**

Inside the RIC, families with children whose asylum claims have been rejected on appeal are being concentrated in large rubhalls hosting 80 to 100 persons of the “green zone”, which is also the most remote and one of the dirtiest areas of the camp (see picture below). Families hosted there complain about the lack of space and safety for their children, given the absence of an escape route in case of fire of the rubhall and the dirt, rats and bed bugs which they are exposed to.

Vulnerable persons (including among others people with physical disabilities, chronic health conditions, single parents with minor children and pregnant women) are mostly hosted in the “blue zone” of Mavrovouni camp, which alternates between tents shared among eight persons and ISO box containers. However, at present, this part of the camp lacks sufficient capacity to host all persons with vulnerabilities. Some of the Legal Centre Lesbos’ clients with severe medical conditions and physical disabilities are forced to live in other zones, where they sleep on the floor of tents shared with unrelated persons. Furthermore, the shower facilities adapted for persons with disabilities (which have running water, as opposed to the bucket showers found across the rest of the camp) were built *outside* of the blue zone – and at approximately five minutes’ walking distance. This means that they are in practice very difficult to access for people with limited mobility or in wheelchairs.

The inhumane living conditions imposed on people in Lesvos RIC are coupled with pervasive anxiety and uncertainty created by de facto detention, mass rejections and accelerated assessments of residents' claims. (see below on the asylum procedures). For a full year now, people have been forced to live in the “temporary” RIC of Lesvos in horrendous conditions, with the poor excuse that people’s stay there would be temporary. However, as confirmed by the Greek proverb, “there is nothing more permanent than the temporary” (Ουδέν μόνιμότερον του προσωρινού).

For more information read our publication [here](#).

(2) Asylum procedures



Group information session by a trained caseworker at the Legal Centre Lesvos office, September 2021

As of 26 August, the population registered as living in the RIC of Lesvos amounted to **3654 persons** as per the camp management internal statistics, including:

- ★ **64% of the camp population being from Afghanistan;**
- ★ **40% of the camp population being either rejected on appeal or having filed a subsequent application; and**
- ★ **Only 386 persons officially recognised as “vulnerable,” according to the camp authorities.**

As described above, the Legal Centre noted a change in practice over the course of the summer in which the Greek authorities have let people leave the island of Lesbos by their own means, if they had been rejected from the asylum procedure and had medical documents indicating that they need medical treatment in Athens, or when the Appeals Committees have ordered people to leave Greece by their own means after having their asylum claim rejected on appeal.

Furthermore, those who have been fortunate enough to have been granted international protection, have also been able to leave the island if they have the financial means to purchase tickets and pay the fees to obtain their identification documents. The resultant “unofficial decongestion” has led to a **significant decrease of the Lesbos RIC population**, to around 3200 persons registered in the camp as of the start of September.

➤ *Legal aid provided by Legal Centre Lesbos between July and September 2021*

Legal Centre Lesbos’ Greek lawyers represented:

- ★ 55 individuals in the asylum procedure, including cases of family reunification;
- ★ 5 individuals on appeal of their asylum claims;
- ★ 2 cases before the Greek Administrative Court for annulment proceedings (i.e. last resort administrative appeal);
- ★ 1 case before the Greek civil court to obtain the custody of a minor by his adult brother;
- ★ 2 individuals in detention.

Among those successfully represented in their asylum procedures was an individual from Mali, who entered Greece in 2017, was violently attacked and arrested by Greek police following protests in Moria camp in July 2017. As one of the “**Moria 35**”, he was unjustly imprisoned for Greek prison before being transferred to Pre-Removal Detention Centre following a trial and conviction in a kangaroo court for supposedly causing bodily injury to police officers. Meanwhile, his asylum claim had been rejected on appeal, and he faced deportation.

Following the registration of a subsequent application for asylum, filed with representation of the Legal Centre Lesbos, he was finally released. Now, approximately three years after his release from detention, and more than four years since he first arrived in Lesbos from Turkey, **he has finally been granted refugee status.**

Volunteer caseworkers with the Legal Centre Lesvos carried out:

- ★ 298 individual legal consultations;
- ★ 20 interview preparations;
- ★ 58 referrals to alternative housing services or protection services;
- ★ 2 group information sessions to 15 individuals.

Legal Centre Lesvos:

- ★ Filed 9 petitions for interim measures before the European Court of Human Rights (see above);
- ★ Published 2 “Know your rights” information sheets, [available online](#), providing information about people’s rights when interacting with the police in Greece as well as during the asylum interview.

Over the last months, people who have arrived on the island of Lesvos have systematically been kept in health quarantines for at least a full week following their arrival, in which the Greek authorities do not provide any information regarding the asylum procedure or legal assistance, and those in quarantine are not allowed to access lawyers. The Greek authorities then schedule people for their substantive asylum interview on the day following their release from health quarantine or a few days after that, **leaving them no time to access legal information in relation to their rights or legal support in relation to their asylum claim before their crucial asylum interview and consequently before the examination of their case**

These accelerated procedures, added to the severe restrictions of movement in and out of the camp (described above), have made it increasingly challenging, if not impossible, for people to access the Legal Centre Lesvos office in town - or at any other NGO providing free legal assistance - before their asylum claim is assessed and decided upon. In response, the **Legal Centre Lesvos has resumed its group information sessions** (see picture above) so as to provide legal assistance to more people before their asylum interview.

Moreover the **Legal Centre Lesvos** has started to publish a set of information sheets, named “**Know your rights**”, which are available online and in our office in four languages. These provide information on matters ranging from aspects of the asylum process as implemented in Lesvos, to interacting with the police. The info sheets are not intended to be a replacement for direct and in-person legal assistance, they - in the present circumstances - represent an additional opportunity to reach out and provide information to more people in need of legal assistance. The Legal Centre Lesvos will continue to publish additional info sheets over the next months.

Download and read our info sheets [here](#).



- *Greece continuously rejects asylum claims of Afghans as inadmissible despite the situation in Afghanistan*

Despite the recent developments in Afghanistan, with the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, the **Greek Asylum Service** continued to implement the **Joint Ministerial Decision (JMD)** adopted on **7 June 2021**, through September, declaring that **Turkey is a safe country for Afghan, Somali, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Syrian nationals.**

Consequently, the Greek authorities have refused to examine the substance of many asylum applications, including those made by many Afghan citizens, who were rejected on admissibility. Several Legal Centre Lesvos clients from Afghanistan were subjected to expedited interviews, which lasted approximately fifteen minutes and included only questions about their experience in Turkey - with no word about Afghanistan.

This, in itself, is **unacceptable. It amounts to an effective denial of the right to seek asylum and of the responsibility for the protection of people** from several of the least safe countries in the world. Moreover, it puts people at grave risk, as Turkey is not a safe third country for migrants and does not offer for asylum seekers the potential of being recognised as refugees or to be protected against refoulement.

However, this practice is not surprising. Five days before the fall of Kabul, Greece and five other EU countries were calling the European Commission to allow those states to resume deportations to Afghanistan of all Afghans who have been refused asylum, despite the worsening situation in their country and the advance of the Taliban.

After the news of the Taliban takeover of Kabul became official, the Minister of Migration and Asylum in Greece, Notis Mitarakis, publicly announced that Greece cannot become a "gateway for a new wave of refugees." He further reiterated that Greece would apply the safe third country concept to Afghans, essentially blocking their access to international protection in Europe.

Greece's position is also consistent with its **increased efforts over the last years to practically restrict people's access to asylum**, such as through its reform of the asylum legislation's vulnerability provisions, the acceleration of procedures, the restriction of access to legal assistance, and the State's widespread and systematic practice of collective expulsions, as well as the country's reiterated request on 28 July to the European Commission to immediately return about 2,000 migrants to Turkey in application of the EU-Turkey deal.

Legal Centre Lesbos joined other civil society organisations calling for solidarity with Afghan people, instead of the EU member states' focus on measures of deterrence and return. The publication can be read here in Greek. **The statement reaffirmed that every person at risk of persecution on grounds of their identity or conscience has the right to be protected under international refugee protection law and that every person seeking asylum has the right to have his or her claim examined individually, as provided for under international and EU law.**

A solidarity gathering was also organised by Afghans in Lesbos, as well as in several other places in Greece.



Gathering in solidarity with Afghanistan in Sappho square, Lesvos, 16 August 2021, Credits: Fellipe Lopes.

➤ *Discriminatory exclusion from all social rights for migrants rejected on appeal*

As of August 2021, almost half of the camp population of the Lesvos RIC had already had their asylum claim rejected on appeal and were therefore considered under Greek law as “outside of the asylum procedure”. This means that they also no longer have any right to cash assistance, legal aid from state lawyers, or social security services in Greece, such as health care including appointments with doctors (with the exception of emergency services).

The National Public Health Organisation (EODY), which operates a clinic in the Lesvos RIC also announced in the last week of August that the State would **no longer proceed with the COVID-19 vaccinations of people outside of the asylum procedure**, under the pretext that the State could not issue a vaccine certificate for those without an active social security number. People who already had appointments for their vaccination with EODY in the camp, but had since received a second instance rejection on their asylum claim, were also refused vaccination when they came to their appointments.

Such discrimination has **severe consequences on people’s lives**. Not only does it exclude their prospect of vaccination, but also, without an active social security number (as is the case for those outside of the procedure), they are unable to obtain a certified COVID-19 rapid test from pharmacies or public health authorities. Without either a vaccine or such a certificate, they are excluded from some shops, restaurants, as well as public services and spaces with COVID-19 entry requirements - including, for example,

the police station of Mytilene, which some people with rejections need to access to authorised a lawyer through a power of attorney, or to report any offences against them.

Legal status has no bearing on public health imperatives, and **the exclusion of migrants from the vaccination programme on this basis is a violation of the fundamental principle of non-discrimination**. It also constitutes an unjustifiable and major public health risk.

➤ *15 September - Effective termination of UNHCR cash assistance for migrants without any announced plans of replacement*

Even the minimal and inadequate assistance provided to those recognised as asylum seekers has been further cut. In September, UNHCR announced the termination of its cash assistance programme as of 15 September 2021, the date in which all persons eligible were requested to withdraw their last cash allowance. There has been no official announcement by the Greek State confirming that this programme will in fact be continued by the State services or some other entities, or if so, under which eligibility criteria.

Clients of the Legal Centre Lesbos have expressed desperation as to how they will be able to cover their basic needs from now on, particularly while being forced to live in the Lesbos RIC, unable to leave the island due to geographic restrictions, and not having access to any work - as asylum seekers do not have permission to work for the first six months after they register their application for asylum.

Some clients stated that they are “working” three shifts for different non-governmental organisations operating inside the camp and survive on the 20 Euro supermarket coupons and 12 Euros mobile top up cards given to them by different organisations in exchange for their services, such as interpreting, helping to move tents, or building ISO box containers, cleaning the bins, or gathering empty bottles.

(3) Collective expulsions and other human rights violations



Frontex vessel stationed in front of a terrace in Molyvos in the North of Lesbos, September 2021. Credits: Fellipe Lopes

➤ ***14 July - Publication of the report of Frontex Scrutiny Working Group concludes on Frontex's negligence to address evidence of fundamental rights violations***

In July, the Frontex Scrutiny Working Group (FSWG) established by the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs published a final report on the fact-finding investigation of Frontex concerning alleged fundamental rights violations.

Legal Centre Lesbos contributed to the fact-finding mission of the Frontex Scrutiny Working Group, held meetings with and hearings before European Parliament members regarding the responsibility of the Hellenic Coast Guard, Frontex, and other EU institutions in carrying out pushbacks, and submitted relevant evidence to the European Parliament on documented pushbacks carried out by the Hellenic Coast Guard in the Aegean Sea, and on the connection between collective expulsions and Frontex's operations.

The FSWG "did not find conclusive evidence on the direct performance of pushbacks and/or collective expulsions by Frontex in the serious incident cases that could be examined by the FSWG," despite numerous media reports evincing Frontex's involvement in such incidents.

However, the FSWG concluded that Frontex “found evidence in support of allegations of fundamental rights violations in Member States with which it had a joint operation, but failed to address and follow-up on these violations promptly, vigilantly and effectively. As a result, **Frontex did not prevent these violations, nor reduced the risk of future fundamental rights violations,**” in violation of its supervisory obligations under EU Regulation 2019/1896.

This recognition of Frontex’s failure to act supports the Legal Centre Lesvos and Front-lex’s pre-legal action against Frontex and its Executive Director, initiated in February 2021, which requested the suspension or termination of Frontex activities in the Aegean region owing to Frontex’s failure to comply with its supervisory obligations. Since then, a legal action concerning this same failure has been brought before the European Court of Justice against Frontex. Nonetheless, Frontex continues to operate in the Aegean Sea, and none of its directors or operatives have been held to account for their failures to act to prevent life-threatening, and ongoing, collective expulsions and the human rights abuses that they entail.

Furthermore, the FSWG “found **deficiencies in Frontex’s mechanisms to monitor, report and assess fundamental rights situations and developments** (...) [but also] identified gaps in the framework of cooperation with Member States, which may hamper the fulfilment of Frontex’s fundamental rights obligations. The FSWG is concerned about the **lack of cooperation of the Executive Director to ensure compliance with some of the provisions of the EBCG Regulation, notably on fundamental rights, which led to significant delays in the implementation of the Regulation.** In this context, **the FSWG regrets [the Executive Director’s] recurrent refusal to implement the recommendations of the Commission** to ensure compliance with the newly adopted Regulation. (...) Moreover, the FSWG takes the position that the Management Board should have played a much more proactive role in acknowledging the serious risk of fundamental rights violations and in **taking action to ensure that Frontex fulfils its negative and positive fundamental rights obligations** as enshrined in the Regulation.”

The final report of the FSWG is, ultimately, a disappointment. Despite recognising Frontex’s failure to act to prevent human rights abuses, it glosses over the active role that the agency has played in collective expulsions, in sustaining the Greek authorities’ systematic practice thereof, and in perpetuating European and Member State officials’ impunity for the torturous and often fatal consequences of these incidents. Moreover, it fails to adequately identify - let alone redress - Frontex’s inherent defects, insofar as it suggests that *were an effective human rights monitoring system in place*, the agency could act in a manner compliant with international human rights standards. This is not the case.

The survivors and victims of these expulsions are legally entitled to remedy and reparations for the abuses that they have suffered, but the FSWG takes no steps to identify how such redress could be achieved. Frontex’s operations have repeatedly proven violent and have run roughshod over individuals’ procedural and substantive human rights, and yet the agency is yet to be called to account before a judiciary. Tinkering with the Agency’s internal structures falls far short of what is necessary: the urgent defunding and abolition of Frontex.

➤ *August 2021 - Visit of British Priti Patel to Greece to observe the country's methods to stop the arrival of migrants' boats.*

In August, the United Kingdom's Home Secretary, Priti Patel, visited Samos. Patel oversees the UK's hostile immigration policies, and in recent months, has entered in to discussions regarding the construction of offshore migrant processing centres, the use of wave machines to inhibit migrants attempting to cross the English channel in small boats, and the potential exclusion of UK border officials from prosecution if illegal pushbacks result in migrants' deaths.

Media reported that during her trip to Samos, the UK Home office went on patrol with the Hellenic Coast Guard to observe the methods being used in the country to prevent boat crossings from Turkey. This is particularly interesting given the amount of public evidence available demonstrating that the Hellenic Coast Guard has been systematically expelling migrants back to Turkey in illegal and violent "pushbacks" for more than a year now.

This visit should be a call to alarm to those in solidarity with migrants on both sides of the Channel, to ensure that the violent practices of Greek authorities are not replicated there. Greece's expanded use of detention to control people at its borders should be nothing new to Ms. Patel. Tens of thousands of asylum seekers are detained each year in the UK, and the UK is one of the only countries in Europe that allows for the indefinite detention of asylum seekers - meaning that some people have been imprisoned for decades in the UK awaiting resolution of their cases. Nor are the horrible, inhumane conditions of the Greek islands new for Ms. Patel. The number of people dying in government run accommodation in the UK is alarmingly increasing in the last year.

Furthermore, just as the EU has paid billions to Turkey to prevent people from crossing the border from Turkey to Greece, the UK has also paid France to prevent people from crossing the Channel, and has recently agreed to pay a new £54m deal to France to increase patrols and stem the rising number of migrants crossing to the UK. This adds to the millions already dispersed to fortify the UK-France border, particularly since 2015.

Greek and UK border policies go hand in hand to serve the same policy goals of deterrence, externalisation, and violent border fortification regardless of the human lives lost.



Picture of ΑΣ 050 one of the five Hellenic Coast Guard Open Sea patrol vessels currently on active duty in the Aegean Sea.

➤ ***September 2021 - Successful relocation of 27-year-old M.M. to Germany after 7 months' efforts***

M.M., a 27-year-old Afghan beneficiary of subsidiary protection, who attempted to self-immolate in the Mavrovouni Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) of Lesbos on February 21, 2021, has been safely relocated to Germany with her family. The transfer to Germany was made possible by a new order of the Investigating Judge of the First Instance Court of Mytilene, which allowed for her exit from the country, under the condition that M.M. reports at a Greek consular authority in Germany once a month, until a final ruling on the criminal charges pending against her is made.

In February, M.M. – then pregnant – attempted to take her life inside Mavrovouni Temporary Reception and Identification Centre (RIC), in Lesbos. As a result of the attempted self-immolation, M.M. sustained injuries on several parts of her body, including her head, both hands, back, and legs, and inhaled smoke that caused her to lose consciousness for a short period of time. M.M. was rescued by the residents of the neighbouring tents and was transferred to the hospital immediately after.

M.M. and her family had lived for more than a year in the inhuman conditions of Moria and Mavrovouni RICs before she attempted to take her life. For this act of desperation, she was later charged with “arson with intent, endangering life and the objects of others”, as well as with “damage of an object of common utility by means of fire.” The case is still pending at the pre-trial-stage.

HIAS Greece and Legal Centre Lesbos expressed their satisfaction with the positive outcome regarding the family’s relocation. The decisions taken by the Judicial Authorities as well as those of the Central Asylum Service were instrumental in making the family’s transfer possible. At the same time, we hope that the Judicial Authorities will recognize M.M.’s act of desperation as self-harm, which is not punishable according to the Greek penal code. This criminal case constitutes another example of misguided use of criminal law mechanism against refugees, and simultaneously reveals the failure of the state to provide adequate living conditions for persons seeking international protection in Greece.