



**ANNUAL
REPORT 2024**

**LEGAL
CENTRE
LESVOS**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos provided free **legal information and assistance to 299 cases of individuals and families in their asylum or migration procedures**, reaching over 563 people. Cases taken on included: representation before the Asylum Service, Migration Office, Appeals Committees, and Administrative Court; conducting individual consultations and information sessions in order to provide information on legal rights and obligations under the Greek asylum procedure; preparation of legal memorandum in support of asylum claims - on both admissibility and eligibility of the claims; providing information on the content of international protection rejection decisions and advising on grounds for appeal; registration of subsequent applications for international protection; submission of applications for residency, and submission of applications for family reunification for beneficiaries of international protection. In addition to the above, the Legal Centre Lesvos provided **emergency legal aid through its lawyers to recently arrived, unregistered asylum seekers, in order to ensure their access to the asylum procedure and exercise their right to seek asylum**. This support was carried out in close coordination with Greek authorities, UNHCR and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and has ensured not only access to legal assistance and the asylum procedure, but also urgently needed medical and/or psychological support.

From the people who accessed Legal Centre Lesvos' services in 2024, approximately 19% were nationals from Sierra Leone, 18% from Afghanistan, 14% from Syria, 11% from Eritrea, 6% from the Democratic Republic of Congo and 4.5% from Palestine. The rest of the people accessing Legal Centre Lesvos' services in this period were nationals of Cameroon, Somalia, Guinea, Sudan, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Haiti, Gambia, Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Liberia, Morocco, Ethiopia, Uganda, Cuba, The Gambia, Equatorial Guinea.

Legal Centre Lesvos assisted individuals and families belonging to particular vulnerable groups including pregnant women, women who recently gave birth, unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities, people suffering from serious illnesses, survivors of torture and sexual assault, single parents with minor children, elderly, people suffering from post traumatic stress disorder and survivors of other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence or exploitation.

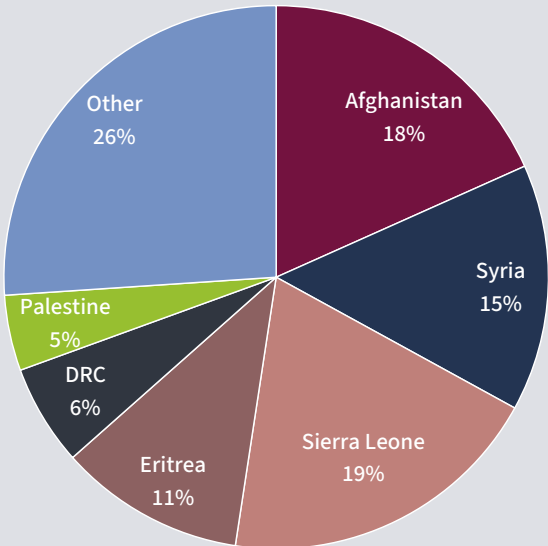
CASE MANAGEMENT AND LEGAL ASSISTANCE

Throughout 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos:

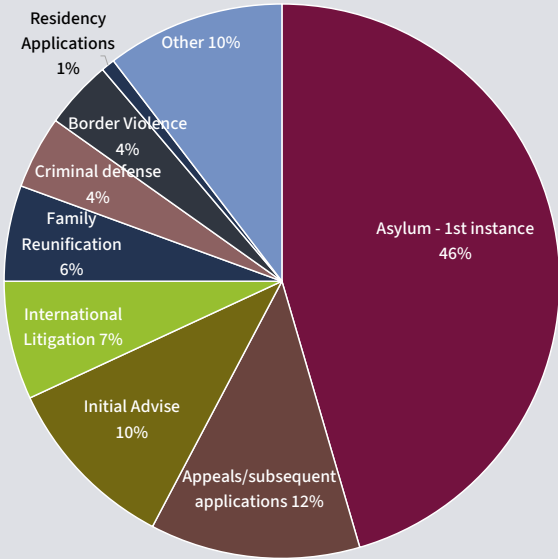
- Provided direct and individual legal assistance to 299 individuals and families - reaching a total of over 563 people, including over 157 women, 216 men, and 190 children.
- Conducted 365 individual legal consultations through its lawyers and legally trained volunteer caseworkers, meeting with migrants at every stage of the asylum procedure, and providing information about migrants’ rights and obligations within the Greek migration system. Amongst these consultations, 113 preparatory interviews with asylum seekers prior to their asylum interviews with authorities were conducted.
- Represented through its lawyers 80 individuals in the asylum procedure, taking on representation at all stages of the asylum procedure. Amongst these cases, lawyers took on representation of 18 individuals on appeal of a rejected asylum claim.

2.298 PEOPLE SUPPORTED

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



SERVICES PROVIDED



- Represented 14 individuals facing criminal charges or administrative detention in their criminal procedures or before administrative court.
- Provided legal representation through its lawyers to 4 individuals/families who were victims of crimes or surviving family members of victims of crimes in Greek civil and criminal procedures.
- Represented 5 recognised refugees in support of their family reunification applications.
- Represented 4 individuals in applications for residency before the Migration Office
- Provided weekly information sessions at the Parea Community Center in Lesvos.
- Provided emergency legal aid to recently arrived, unregistered asylum seekers, in order to ensure their access to the asylum procedure and exercise their right to seek asylum. The Legal Centre Lesvos successfully supported 56 groups with over 1735 people in exercising their right to apply for asylum in Greece, avoiding their refoulement to Turkey.
- In addition to the daily legal assistance in its office, the Legal Centre Lesvos continued to collaborate with other actors on the island, referring people who access LCL's services to alternative accommodation in Mytilene and in mainland Greece, as well as to medical, psycho-social, or other support services, working in close collaboration with organisations such as UNHCR, MSF, Welcome Office Lesvos, Bashira, and Caritas.

STRATEGIC LITIGATION

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos took on legal representation in a variety of cases in defence of migrant rights, which were litigated before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) and different international institutions:

- In May, [the Legal Centre Lesvos filed an application before the ECtHR](#) on behalf of two of the Moria 6 defendants, who were convicted and spent, respectively, nearly 2 years and over 3 years in prison. Numerous violations of their right to a fair trial during the criminal procedures against them were raised under Article 6 of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).
- In September, Legal Centre Lesvos and partner organisations (de:border, HIAS Greece, Equal Rights Beyond Borders, and Mobile Info Team) submitted observations to the European Ombudsman following [her inquiry](#) into the European Commission's administration of Greece's EU-funded border operations, opened in response to our joint complaint filed in 2023. Our submission highlighted the Commission's failure to act on extensive evidence of systemic rights violations, including 'pushbacks', and its reliance on Greece's inadequate and ineffective monitoring mechanisms. In our submission, we criticise the Commission's lack of transparency and enforcement, and call for stronger action to ensure EU funds are not used in ways that undermine fundamental rights.
- In October, the ECtHR communicated new pushback cases to Greece in [A.A.N. and Others v. Greece and 7 other applications](#), all related to the unlawful refoulement of asylum seekers from Greece to Türkiye without due process in March 2020. The applicants, represented by Legal Centre Lesvos lawyers, claim that following their documented arrival to the Greek island of Symi, they were detained in an unofficial site before being unlawfully returned towards Turkish waters and left adrift on a liferaft. The communication of a case is an important procedural step in ECtHR litigation, as it means that the respondent state must respond in Court to the allegations and evidence presented by the Applicants, unless a friendly settlement is reached.
- In November, the Legal Centre Lesvos and the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDHR), [submitted a third-party intervention](#) to the ECtHR in the case of Muhammad v. Greece ([No. 34331/22](#)). This case addresses the killing of Muhammed Gulzar, who was fatally shot while attempting to cross the Turkish-Greek border in March 2020. This intervention emphasizes the systemic use of lethal force and violent pushbacks by Greek authorities, the inaccessibility of legal remedies for survivors and surviving family members, and the State's deliberate suppression of evidence in pushback cases.
- In November, the [Greek state and one of our clients agreed to a friendly settlement](#) in the case A.M. v. Greece (Application no. 40408/21). In A.M. v. Greece, the ECtHR recognised in 2021 that there was an imminent risk of irreparable harm to our client and granted interim

measures we had filed, ordering Greece at that time to ensure access to healthcare and living conditions in compliance with Article 3 of the ECHR. Subsequently a full application containing allegations that Greece had in fact violated A.M.'s right to be free from torture, inhuman, and degrading treatment was filed before the Court, and this case was communicated to the Greek state in April 2024.

- In November, the Legal Centre Lesvos [filed an emergency request for interim measures](#) under Rule 39, before the ECtHR, on behalf of ten unregistered asylum seekers including three unaccompanied minors, who had arrived on Rhodos island, were denied access to the asylum procedure and reception conditions, and were at risk of refoulement to Turkey. Following this request, the group was finally registered and transferred to Leros island.
- In December, together with de:border // migration justice collective we provided joint input to the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants' [report on the 'phenomenon' of missing migrants – human rights analysis](#). This joint submission exposes the root causes of migrants' disappearances during border crossings, in particular analysing the direct impact of state actions such as systematic pushbacks and non rescue policies, which inherently endanger migrants' lives.

Further, the Legal Centre Lesvos also took on representation in defence of migrant rights by:

- **Moria 6 Defense:** Representing four of the six Afghan defendants who were [accused and convicted](#) for the fires that destroyed Moria refugee camp in September 2020. Following [their appeal trial between 4-8 March 2024](#), one of the six young Afghans was found guilty by the Mixed-Jury Court of Appeals of the North Aegean in Mytilene, Lesvos and sentenced to 8 years in prison. The other three defendants were released from prison, after the Court recognized they were under 18 when they were arrested, and so were convicted in error by an incompetent court in their first trial in Chios in 2021. Their case was referred for re-trial in the juvenile court, where [they were later acquitted](#), in April of 2025.
- **Pylos 9 Defense:** [Representing two of the nine survivors](#) of the Pylos shipwreck, who had been arrested following the deadly Pylos shipwreck, in which 650 people were killed on 14 June 2023. On 21 May 2024, after being unjustly detained for over eleven months, the Criminal Court of Kalamata acquitted the nine defendants of smuggling and illegal entry. It also declared itself incompetent to adjudicate the accusations of membership of a criminal organisation and causing the Pylos shipwreck, based on the fact that the alleged offences happened in international waters, therefore outside of Greek jurisdiction.
- **Suspension of Deportation:** In June 2024, the Administrative Court [granted an application filed by LCL to suspend the effects](#) of an asylum seeker's final rejection while his administrative appeal is pending, in which we argued, in part, that due to the Applicant's severe medical condition he should not be returned to his country of origin. The granting of this application resulted in the Applicant regaining the status of asylum seeker until a decision is taken by the administrative court, suspending any deportation to Somalia, and giving him access to public health services.

- **Representation of Asylum Seekers in Administrative Detention:** [9 asylum seekers](#) who had travelled from other parts of Greece to Lesbos to register their asylum claims were detained at the Mytilini police station under administrative detention, without trial or charges. Following representation by the LCL, these asylum seekers were eventually transferred to the Detention Centre of Amygdaleza in Athens, before being released.

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesbos continued litigating cases of border violence in front of Greek Courts:

- **Justice for the Pylos:** In July 2024, the LCL filed a complaint before the Naval Court of Piraeus on behalf of two clients—survivors of the Pylos shipwreck who were among the Pylos 9 and had been wrongfully accused of smuggling and causing the shipwreck. The complaint presents evidence demonstrating that the HCG’s actions and omissions subjected our clients to torture and exposed them to life-threatening conditions, both due to the HCG’s failure to rescue those on board for several hours, and by ultimately causing the shipwreck by attempting to tow the overcrowded vessel. The two survivors we represent lodged their complaint as part of a [broader group of survivors](#) who have filed similar complaints against the HCG in the Naval Court.
- **Pushback litigation in Greece:** In May 2024, the LCL filed a criminal complaint with the Thessaloniki prosecutor on behalf of a family of eight Afghan nationals who were violently expelled from Greece to Turkey at the Evros border in an unlawful pushback operation by Greek authorities, after arriving in Greece and attempting to seek asylum here. The investigation is ongoing as of 11 March 2025. The alleged offenses include torture, sexual assault, and bodily harm inflicted by numerous state actors.
- **Litigation on behalf of Surviving Family Members of Fatal Pushback Operations:** In 2024, the LCL filed two complaints in Greek court on behalf of the surviving family members of people who were killed in two separate pushback operations in 2022 and 2023, by the Hellenic Coast Guard, both cases of which are still under investigation. In one case, the case of [Barış Büyüksu](#), the LCL lodged a criminal complaint against unknown persons before the Prosecutor’s Office in Kos. Barış Büyüksu, a Turkish citizen, was found semi-conscious on 22 October 2022 in a life raft off the coast of Bodrum, in Turkey. He died while awaiting emergency medical assistance. Witnesses reported that Barış had been tortured by Greek authorities while in custody in Greece, before being unlawfully expelled towards Turkish waters in an unlawful pushback operation. The Progressive Lawyers Association (CHD) and LCL’s lawyers are representing the family in order for a thorough investigation to take place to hold accountable those responsible for Barış’s death.

ADVOCACY

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos continued documenting and denouncing human rights violations at the Aegean Sea border, by regularly engaging with human rights institutions and the press on a range of issues related to migrants' rights and the situation in Lesvos and in Greece. Additionally, throughout 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos took part in [joint advocacy initiatives](#) in order to [advance migrant rights](#), including through participation in [numerous panel discussions](#), [presentations](#), and [conferences](#).

In June and October 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos and the Izmir-based Agora Association, with the support of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, organized two conferences on “[Defence of Migrant Rights Across Borders](#)”, in Lesvos and in Izmir. The conferences gathered organisations and persons coming from across Europe for three days of panels, and workshops, and events, addressing issues of criminalisation of migration, combating border violence, and means of resistance.

The Legal Centre Lesvos also continued to contribute to and participate in the [ELDH](#), the [Captain Support Network](#) and the Greek National Commission of Human Rights established [Recording Mechanism of Incidents of Informal Forced Returns](#) and [Racist Violence Recording Network](#).

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos became a member organisation of the [Migreurop Network](#). The Migreurop Network's aim is to document, decipher, and jointly denounce the consequences of European migration policies on the rights and living conditions of migrants. Advocating for the freedom of movement for all, the Legal Centre Lesvos joined the Migreurop Network's struggle against border violence and the detention of migrants, contributing to the network by supporting the growing public awareness and interest from civil society.

The Legal Centre Lesvos continues to regularly publish updates, statements, and reports on its website such as:

- The publication of 11 stories, in a monthly ‘[Nonsense of the Month](#)’ series, which highlight the administrative Kafkaesque procedural obstacles and arbitrary decisions that migrants face in Greece, in particular throughout their asylum procedures.
- The continuation of the collaboration with the Memory Centre and Community Peacemakers Teams on the bi-weekly publication of the Podcast “[Crossing the Aegean](#)”, with the publication of 15 episodes in 2024. The podcast series envisions a transnational Aegean that opposes xenophobia, racism, and anti-migrant rhetoric stemming from the concept of national borders.
- [The publication of a joint statement In March 2024](#), on the obstacles recognized refugees face in exercising their right to be reunified with their families. The joint statement was signed together with 14 civil society organisations, also shared with the relevant Greek Ministries

of Asylum and Migration, Foreign Affairs and Interior. The statement focuses on the Greek State obligations to ensure the rights of refugees to family reunification and to respect their fundamental right to private and family life.

- As a member of ELDH, in April and September 2024 the Legal Centre Lesvos joined an [international trial observers team](#) with the Border Violence Monitoring Network and the Feminist Autonomous Center, that attended the Appeal trial of Homayoun Sabetara, which took place in the Appeal Court of Thessaloniki. Mr. Sabetara is an Iranian asylum seeker who was accused of smuggling in Greece. Following his conviction on 26 September 2022, he was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment, but his sentence was later reduced to 7 years and 4 months on appeal in September 2024, allowing for his release on 17 December 2024.

MANAGEMENT AND FINANCES OF LEGAL CENTRE LESVOS

The Legal Centre Lesvos is a civil non profit organisation registered in Greece. The management of the Legal Centre Lesvos is administered through a General Assembly, made up of its four unpaid Partners, one of whom is jointly designated by the Partners as the legal representative.

In 2024, the Legal Centre Lesvos employed five individuals working in coordination, advocacy outreach and interpretation, and had independent service contracts with four Greek attorneys providing legal services and two freelancers working international litigation and advocacy. All paid Legal Centre team members are paid on an equal pay scale, meaning that all receive the same remuneration after taxes and insurance.

The Legal Centre operates with the exclusive support of individual donations and from [entities](#) that are not complicit in human rights or environmental abuses, and does not accept funds from any State, the European Union, or any EU entities. The Legal Centre Lesvos was funded in 2024 through the following entities:

Source of Funding	% of Budget	Amount
Medico International	17.69%	€51,200.00
United4Rescue	10.54%	€30,504.00
Global Fund for Human Rights	9.33%	€26,998.60
La Garriga Societat Civil / Fons Català de Cooperació	9.09%	€26,311.30
ForRefugees	8.97%	€25,954.75
Rosa Luxemburg Foundation	8.29%	€24,000.01
Open Eyes Balkan Route	1.44%	€4,165.80
Durham University	1.44%	€4,160.07
European Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights	0.98%	€2,847.74
Asociación Amigos de Ritsona	0.69%	€2,000.00
Unrestricted, individual donations	31.54%	€91,283.21
Total Operating Expenses 2024		€289,425.48

CONCLUSION

The actions of the Legal Centre Lesvos in this operational period demonstrate that Legal Centre Lesvos AMKE continues to work in a manner that is true to its statutory purposes. Further details of the Legal Centre Lesvos' work in 2024 can be found in our Quarterly Reports.

- [January – March 2024 Newsletter](#)
- [April - June 2024 Newsletter](#)
- [July – September Newsletter](#)
- [October – December 2024 Newsletter](#)