CALL FOR THE IMMEDIATE HALT OF VASTRIA CCAC

Joint Statement
20 April 2026

We are calling for the immediate halt of all plans to construct, open, or operate the Vastria Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) on Lesvos. The development of this facility, within the framework of Law 5226/2025 and the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, constitutes a direct threat to fundamental human rights.

Despite the heavy criticism, the Greek government approved yet another extension until March 2026 for the Vastria Camp to be completed. In a series of technical redesigns and legal amendments, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum (MoMA) has circumvented Council of State rulings and bypassed environmental regulation. In the latest developments, the Decentralised Administration of the Northern Aegean has approved a very problematic amendment of the environmental terms concerning related works of the CCAC, approving the construction of a photovoltaic plant and a battery storage facility, as well as the construction of the obligatory escape road, for the sole purpose of servicing the CCAC despite serious concerns about its location within a NATURA 2000 site.

The establishment of Vastria must be examined within the context of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and the proposed Return Regulation. Under the Migration Pact's Screening Regulation, third-country nationals will be de facto detained in facilities like Vastria, raising serious concerns regarding the violation of their rights. The European Return Order (ERO) and the legal grounds for "return camps" outside EU territory will further normalise the use of pre-removal detention as a tool for forced deportation. The deprivation of liberty is expected to become systematic through expanded use of detention as a default practice rather than an exceptional measure.

At the same time, a recent Greek legislation (Law 5226/2025) expands the grounds for administrative detention (i.e. detention without criminal charges), criminalises "illegal stay", and criminalises non-compliance with removal orders. The law also extends maximum administrative detention times from 18 to 24 months based on broad criteria like "security concerns". Implementation of Law 5226/2025 has already begun, with individuals facing criminal proceedings for "illegal stay".

Vastria CCAC has been explicitly designed to detain people on the move for extended periods of time, functioning in part as a pre-removal detention center, in accordance with the priorities of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. When Vastria CCAC opens, the arbitrary detention of asylum seekers is expected to increase, resulting in a higher number of individuals placed in pre-removal detention under conditions that may become increasingly coercive and precarious.

The operation of the existing CCACs has already proven to violate fundamental rights of the people detained, regarding the right to liberty (Article 5) and the prohibition of inhuman treatment (Article 3) under the ECHR. Documented conditions in other Greek facilities, such as Samos CCAC, highlight the

risks of overcrowding, unhygienic environments, and insufficient medical care. Furthermore, legal institutions and human rights organisations have expressed serious concerns about the rights of families and children who are detained, as well as about the operation of Hyperion and Centaurus' digital surveillance systems, which endanger the privacy rights of those detained or working in the centres.

The Vastria CCAC, which has been designed as the blueprint for these new generation camps of the EU Pact, raises even more concerns about its site location, since it is seated in the middle of the extremely flammable pine forest of Lesvos island. Experts have repeatedly raised alerts of this risk. In response, the MoMA has awarded a €585,680 contract for a fire detection system which, however, has a more reactive, rather than proactive, role.

Another issue worth highlighting is Vastria's remote location, which isolates residents from legal aid, psychosocial services and direct interaction with local society. The difficulty of reaching the location, together with further access restrictions that are expected to be imposed, will also significantly limit the civic oversight of the operation of the Vastria CCAC.

We reject the establishment of any detention infrastructure or camp in which people will be incarcerated based on their legal status. The creation of such facilities institutionalise the deprivation of liberty, normalise discriminatory practices of segregation and unlawful detention practices, and undermine the fundamental rights of people on the move.

We refuse to accept the normalisation of these "closed" environments which serve only to penalize.

WE DEMAND:

- Ensure that all migration policies fully comply with the European Convention on Human Rights, particularly Article 5 (right to liberty) and Article 3 (prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment)
- Immediately stop all construction activities of the Vastria camp and related works pending full legal and human rights review.
- Ensure all EU-funded infrastructure complies with fundamental rights obligations and is subject to independent monitoring.
- End the use of systematic and automatic detention of migrants and asylum seekers.
- Decriminalise "illegal stay" and ensure migration related administrative issues are not treated as criminal offenses.
- Accountability for the documented human rights breaches in the operating CCACs and Pre-Removal Centres.

SIGNED ORGANISATIONS:

1. Aegean Migrant Solidarity - Community Peacemakers Teams
2. Collective Aid
3. Legal Centre Lesvos
4. Arab Lawyers Association (UK)
5. Avocats Sans Frontières France (ASFF)
6. Changemakers Lab
7. Cyprus Democratic Lawyers Association (CDLA)
8. de:border // migration justice collective
9. Democratic Lawyers Association of Bangladesh
10. Democratic Lawyers of Switzerland (DJS-JDS)
11. EmpowerVan
12. Equal Legal Aid
13. European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights (ELDH)
14. Europe Cares e.V.
15. Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid
16. Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)
17. HIAS Greece
18. Human Rights Legal Project (HRLP) Samos
19. I Have Rights (IHR) Samos
20. InterEuropean Human Aid Association
21. International Association of Democratic Lawyers (IADL)
22. Mazí Housing
23. Mobile Info Team
24. Samos Volunteers
25. Yoga and Sport With Refugees