

PUBLIC STATEMENT

THREE YEARS AFTER MORIA BURNED DOWN THE PROMISE “NO MORE MORIAS” REMAINS AN EMPTY ONE

After Europe’s biggest and most notorious refugee camp burned down in September 2020, promises were made never to let Moria happen again. Authorities guaranteed that state-of-the-art facilities in line with fundamental rights and European standards would be created - improving safety and security, protection for vulnerable people, access to healthcare and fast and effective asylum procedures.¹

Exactly three years after the Moria fire, organisations warn that the EU-funded Closed Controlled Access Centre (C.A.C.C.) Lesvos, replacing Moria, has failed to live up to its promise. With a sharp increase in arrivals over the past few months, the situation at the C.C.A.C. has once again become unsustainable and endangers the health and well-being of people on the move.

ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

After stating that the lack of access to healthcare in Moria was unacceptable in 2020 - a severe lack of medical staff, psychologists, psychiatrists and interpreters at the C.C.A.C. Lesvos persists.² Organisations report an increase in medical emergencies, suicidality, substance dependency and gender-based violence inside the C.C.A.C.

The mandated public provider of healthcare inside the C.C.A.C. Lesvos, the Greek National Public Health Organisation (EODY), is understaffed, with only one permanent doctor for a population of over 3,000 people. The lack of capacity is exacerbated by a considerable number of (medical) organisations ceasing operations or being forced to leave the C.C.A.C..

RECEPTION CONDITIONS

Despite improvements made, the capacity to provide dignified up-to-standard reception conditions is lacking at the C.C.A.C. Lesvos. People are put in Rubb halls with no privacy or partitions and forced to share rooms and containers with complete strangers, often without a mattress.

NGOs stress that a backlog and lack of capacity for registering people has delayed access to healthcare, vulnerability assessments and access to food or water and put people, already in a precarious situation, under additional pressure. Insecurity, delayed procedures and lack of efficient services at the C.C.A.C. often lead to tension and stress disorders.

VULNERABLE PEOPLE

The 2020 objective to create safe zones for vulnerable groups has not materialised. The “safe area” and shelters at the C.C.A.C. on Lesvos cannot be considered safe due to a lack of appropriate protection measures that guarantee safety and security.

Vulnerable people, including unaccompanied children, single mothers and survivors of gender-based violence are sheltered in the former “quarantine area” for long stretches of

¹ EU Commission, ‘Memorandum of Understanding on a Joint Pilot for the establishment and operation of a new Multi-Purpose Reception and Identification Centre on Lesvos’ (2020) 8657 final; European Commission ‘Migration: A European Taskforce to Resolve Emergency Situation on Lesvos’ (23 September 2020).

² RSA and PRO ASYL ‘What’s Happening Today in the Refugee Structures on the Aegean Islands’ (May 2023); Intersos ‘Trapped between Scylla and Charybdis’ (August 2023).

time and are not separated according to gender or vulnerability. Adults have unrestricted access and no permanent security is present in the area, increasing the risk of abuse.

ASYLUM PROCEDURE

Despite promises of fast and effective asylum procedures, several barriers to effective access to the right to seek asylum, including illegal collective returns, bureaucratic obstacles, lack of interpreters, systematic use of accelerated and border procedures, the fallacious use of the safe country concept and lack of recognition of procedural guarantees, have been consistently experienced by people on the move on Lesvos. In addition, organisations report regular and prolonged delays in the registration of arrivals and asylum applications.³

Three years down the road, the reception centres on the Greek islands were meant to be exemplary blueprints for living conditions in line with fundamental rights and European standards and swift procedures at all European borders. Instead, if no action is taken, C.C.A.C. Lesvos provides a stark warning of what is to come.

Supported by:

1. Ariadni Lesvos
2. Better Days Greece
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6. Drapen I Havet (Σταγόνα)
7. ECHO100PLUS
8. Equal Legal Aid
9. Europe Cares e.V. / Paréa Lesvos
10. Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid
11. Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)
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20. Thalassa of Solidarity (Θάλασσα Αλληλεγγύης)
21. Yoga and Sport with Refugees
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³ Article 40(a) and 69(2) of Law 4939/2022, Government Gazette A' 111/10.06.2022 (Asylum Code).