

URGENT ACTION

REFUGEES FACE HELLISH CONDITIONS ON ISLANDS

As weather worsens, thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers are facing inhumane conditions after arriving on the Greek Aegean islands following dangerous and life threatening journeys. They are also at risk of violence by police and members of far-right groups.

Thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers, including many children, are being forced to wait for days to be registered by the Greek police with limited or no access to shelter, food, sanitation and medical treatment. They have arrived to the Aegean islands following a dangerous and life threatening journey. As weather worsens, they find themselves sleeping outside before they can continue the journey to the Greek mainland and beyond.

Overloaded and under-resourced coastguard, police, and local authorities are failing to cope with the dramatic increase in the numbers arriving on the Greek islands (more than 619,101 since the beginning of 2015). A general lack of coordination and occasionally uncooperative local authorities have worsened the situation. Islanders, volunteers, NGOs and aid agencies struggle to cover the enormous gap in humanitarian provision for refugees and asylum-seekers.

On Lesbos, the Greek island with the highest number of arrivals (353,145 as of 4 November), Amnesty International witnessed up to 4,000 people including children and pregnant women exposed to inclement weather conditions for days as they waited to be registered by the police. The refugees sleep outdoors in the informal camps of Moria and Kara Tepe where conditions are dire. On other islands, like Kos and Chios, lack of any reception structures means that many refugees and asylum-seekers have to sleep in tents in places such as parks and the port without having access to basic facilities. "Everyone is wet... in shock, shivering", said one of the volunteers that tries to cover for what local, state and EU authorities have failed to provide. On several occasions, riot police reportedly used tear gas and beat and kicked refugees and asylum-seekers at the Moria camp on Lesbos. In September, Amnesty International witnessed a group of 15 to 25 people attacking refugees and asylum-seekers on Kos.

Please write immediately in Greek, or your own language to:

- Calling on the Greek authorities to urgently and significantly enhance their registration capacity for refugees and asylum-seekers in order to minimize waiting times and alleviate overcrowding on Lesbos and elsewhere;
- Urging local and central authorities to cooperate and establish short-stay shelters with adequate conditions and ensure refugees and asylum-seekers have access to beds, food, clean water, sanitation and medical treatment, especially on islands where there is complete lack of facilities like Kos and elsewhere;
- Urging them to ensure that refugees, asylum-seekers, migrants, aidworkers and activists are protected from violence.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 DECEMBER 2015:

Prime Minister
Alexis Tsipras
Maximos Mansion
19 Irodou Attikou St., Athens
106 74
Greece
Email: mail@primeminister.gr
Salutation: Dear Prime Minister

Alternate Minister of Immigration Policy
Ioannis Mouzalas
2 Evangelistrias St., Athens
105 63
Greece
Fax: +30 2131361239
Email: t.gypp@ypes.gr
Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The heightened security on the Greece-Turkey land border since 2012, including the construction of a 10.5 km fence, has prompted more and more refugees and migrants to take the dangerous sea route. The vast majority of new arrivals are believed to be from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq.

Between January and 3 November 2015, more than 477 refugees and migrants including small children and babies perished when the boats carrying them capsized in the Aegean. Between 28 October and 2 November 2015, more than 89 refugees and migrants perished or were unaccounted for in seven incidents near the shores of Lesbos, Samos, Kalymnos and Rhodes.

A series of factors, including a failing European migration system, poor planning, the ineffective use of EU funds by the central authorities, and the deep financial crisis, has inflamed the situation on the islands.

Only a small percentage of the new arrivals have access to First Reception Services tasked with identifying members of vulnerable groups. There are approximately 1,200 places available in shelters for asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children in Greece which is highly insufficient. The Greek authorities have committed to more than double available places by the end of 2015.

In mid-October, the Greek authorities established a pilot “hotspot” for the screening of new arrivals by the EU border Agency and the Greek police. The “hotspot” operates at the Moria immigration detention centre on Lesbos. However, reception conditions remain dire.

Name: Thousands of refugees and asylum-seekers
Gender m/f: all

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