

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S RESEARCH MISSION TO GREECE: PRELIMINARY REMARKS AND MEETING WITH THE MINISTER FOR IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC

Today a delegation of Amnesty International's European Regional Office and Greek Office met with the Minister for Immigration and Asylum of the Hellenic Republic, Mr Notis Mitarakis.

In the past days Amnesty International researchers have been visiting Greece, documenting the abysmal living conditions on the Aegean Islands of Lesbos and Samos, through the testimonies of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants who are forced to live in the constantly expanding informal camps outside the premises of the EU-funded hotspots there. In the course of their visit, Amnesty International researchers have also taken the opportunity to discuss with several NGOs and agencies working with the refugee population in different capacities both on the islands and mainland Greece.

At the meeting with Mr Mitarakis, the topic of the abysmal living conditions and insecurity to which more than 19,000 and 7,000 people are exposed in the camps of Moria and Vathy was addressed. Amnesty International raised its concerns and presented its initial observations from the mission just concluded and sought the Greek government's views on the matter and future plans.

Amnesty International has also raised its concerns in relation to the effectiveness of asylum-seekers' access to protection through the restrictive provisions of the new Greek Asylum Law currently rolled out on the islands. The organization is currently monitoring the implementation of the law and its impact on the rights of individuals and intends to address its most problematic aspects in due course. During the meeting, the organization's delegation presented its ongoing calls towards the establishment of a genuine solidarity mechanism for asylum-seekers in Europe and remarked on the need for urgent support to the Greek situation.

The organization appeals for the evacuation of people from the unconscionable state of overcrowding and abandonment facing them on the Aegean islands and demands their urgent transfer to adequate accommodation.

Amnesty International also conveyed its regret that the organization's researchers have not been granted access to the formal premises of the hotspots (Reception and Identification Centres or R.I.C.) of Lesbos and Samos despite following the required protocol. They were hence unable to document the conditions for residents living on the premises of the camps and receive the views of service providers operating and the management of the camps.