

JULY/ OCTOBER 2026

SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE
NEWSLETTER

A QUARTER OF RESTRICTIVE PRACTICES AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONCERNS

2026 marks the 75 anniversary of the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, the rights of people seeking asylum and refugees are increasingly being curtailed in favour of security and the protection of EU borders.

The third quarter of 2026 was characterised by the **continued implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum and by significant uncertainty regarding the practical application of the new asylum procedures**.

Throughout the reporting period, organisations continued to report delays in registration and in the issuance of documentation, as well as uncertainty regarding the procedures applicable to people arriving on Samos. Some applicants reportedly remained in the CCAC for extended periods while waiting for registration or the completion of administrative steps. In August, organisations reported cases of people who had been staying in the facility for more than 25 days without complete documentation.

The situation was further complicated by the movement of people between Crete, Samos and mainland Greece. During August and September, people transferred from Crete were brought to Samos for registration and administrative processing. However, the practical arrangements concerning their asylum procedures, interview locations and subsequent transfers remained unclear.

This uncertainty made it difficult for legal organisations to anticipate interview dates and organise adequate preparation. **For the Samos Legal Centre, this meant adapting quickly while maintaining our core services: legal information, individual consultations, interview preparation, legal clinics and support for people in vulnerable situation.**

THE EU PACT ON MIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The implementation in Greece and on Samos

The month of June 2026 marked the entry into force of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, implying numerous unplanned changes and a blurry situation. **Four months later, the situation remains unclear.**

Adopted in 2024, the EU Pact faced major contestation and criticism from local NGOs. Despite their vehement opposition to the Pact, as its implementation is dismantling the asylum system and engendering further violations of the rights of people on the move, the Pact entered into force on **June 12, 2026.**

The aim of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum

According to the EU, the Pact on Migration and Asylum is supposed to bring order, efficiency, and solidarity to Europe's asylum system.

Presented as *"a set of rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level"* by the European Union Agency for Asylum, the EU Pact is supposed to strengthen and secure external borders, bring order and efficiency, while guaranteeing people's rights.

In reality, the Pact and its implementation will have devastating effects on the rights of people on the move crossing EU borders to seek asylum, by entrenching border violence, pushbacks, and detention.

Despite all the promises held by European authorities, the new EU Pact will undermine the right to asylum, allowing governments to rush the assessment of protection claims, limit safeguards in asylum processing, and boost the prevalence and duration of detention for asylum seekers.

Screening and the "fiction of non-entry"

Indeed, one of the aims of the Pact is to extend the hotspot-approach, already applied in Greece, to the entire EU territory. This leads to the implementation of screening processes and the use of detention-like facilities.

According to the screening regulation, people going through screening will not be considered to have legally entered the State, although they are physically on the territory of an EU State. Currently, this ***"fiction of non-entry"*** is already applied by EU States in places like airport transit zones. The aim of the screening procedure determines whether a person has to be subjected to a regular asylum procedure, a border procedure or a return mechanism.

Accelerated border procedures

Consisting of an accelerated procedure, the border procedure is intended to take a maximum of 12 weeks, including appeals. It primarily applies to individuals originating from designated '*safe countries of origin*'—those with historically low asylum recognition rates whose nationals are generally presumed not to require international protection. Given the strict deadlines and restricted access to free legal assistance at border facilities, rebutting this presumption proves virtually impossible in practice.

Detention and access to safeguards

During the asylum procedure, the applicants will likely be **detained in Closed Control Access Centres (CCAC).**

The model of CCACs, just like the one in Samos, will now become the new norm in Europe and will foster detention-like facilities.

The widespread of CCAC combined to the accelerate asylum procedure will then weaken vulnerability assessment and reduce drastically procedure safeguards. Allowing more human rights violations then we already witnessed before the implementation of the Pact.

The transposition of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum in Greece

Following EU's direction in term of minimization of the rights of people on the move, the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum published the legislation transposing the EU Pact into national law.

The Joint Ministerial Decision introduces **mandatory screening procedures at external borders, stringent measures to overhaul border controls, expedite asylum applications and fast track the deportation** of individuals whose asylum claims have been rejected.

Furthermore, the decision raises critical concerns regarding the quality and effectiveness of legal aid available to asylum seekers. Although EU directives require national authorities to guarantee access to free individual legal counsel from the outset of the process, the Joint Ministerial Decision favors group legal information sessions. Crucially, it introduces a **controversy-ridden €250 bonus for lawyers if an applicant agrees to a voluntary return** and withdraws their asylum application.

Those provisions raise major concerns concerning the possibility of having individual legal advice tailored for each situation, as well as the independence of lawyers and their willingness to provide information that are in support of asylum seekers' interests. In response, the Plenary of Presidents of the Greek Bar Associations strongly condemned the measure as an ethical and legal violation. The Plenary demanded the immediate withdrawal of the decree, called on lawyers to refrain from participating under these terms, and initiated legal action before the competent courts to challenge the validity of the decision. However, rather than addressing these concerns or substantially revising the measure, the subsequent amendment merely shifted the responsibility for its implementation onto the Plenary, leaving the substance of the contested provisions unchanged.

The consequences of the new legislation in Samos

In Samos, the first months following the implementation of the EU Pact were marked by confusion, administrative delays, and heightened restrictions—further worsening conditions for newly arrived individuals in an already high-stress environment.

To date, procedural changes remain ambiguous, severely complicating legal aid efforts for asylum seekers. Indeed, the living conditions in the CCAC and the detention it creates make it difficult for asylum seekers to seek legal aid and for legal organizations to contact asylum seekers as access to the CCAC is prohibited.

The living conditions of people who arrived after June 12 are also marked by extended delays between their arrivals and their registrations, preventing them from leaving the CCAC and having access, in particular, to medical assistance because they did not receive their registration documents.

The seven-day statutory deadline established under the EU Pact for completing the screening process appears to be applied selectively, rather than uniformly across all cases.

According to people in the CCACs who arrived after the entry into force of the Pact, the authorities in the camp are automatically asking asylum seekers if they want a lawyer. Their answers will then determine the delays before their asylum interview. People who agree to have a lawyer will have an interview approximately a month after their registration, while the others have their interview date approximately a week or two later. This situation leaves us now with very little time to provide legal advice before the asylum interview.

For now, the overall outlook remains alarming, as administrative delays impede a clear assessment of the new procedures and undermine effective legal support on Samos. Consequently, **there is serious reason to fear a significant erosion of asylum seekers' fundamental rights**.

THE PROJECT IN FIGURES

9
sessions to provide legal information were organised

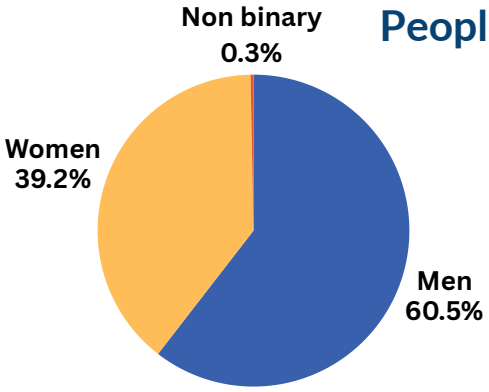
80
Asylum seekers attended legal workshops

50
volunteers from non-legal organisation participated to our online workshop

Field Team

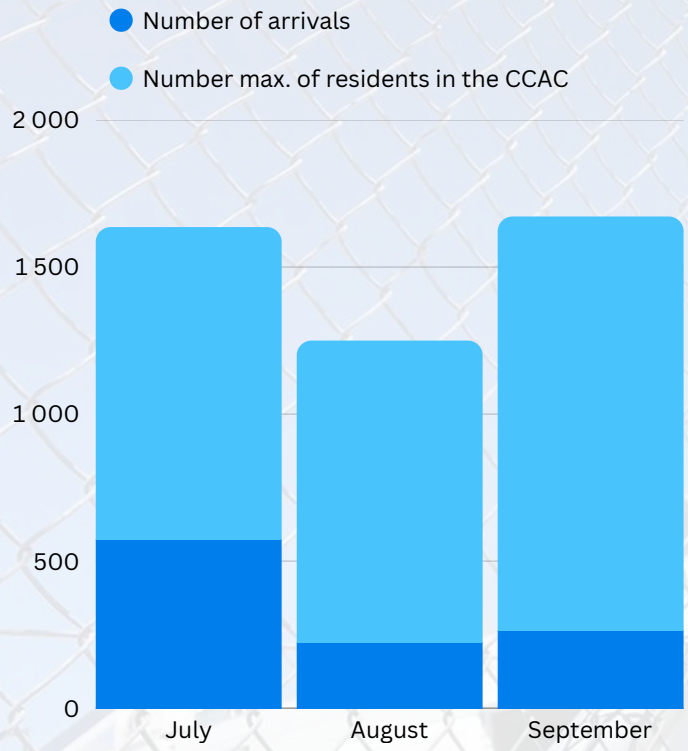
Between July, August and September, we worked with:

1 project manager
2 caseworkers
1 greek lawyers
4 interpreters



People directly supported :

Out of the 328 applicants actively followed over the reporting period **7.3%** of the people we met have declared having survived from SGBV, human trafficking or inhuman treatment.



*Data from the Greek Ministry of Migration

individual preparations for asylum interviews

23

requests sent to the authorities

51

Interview accompaniements

1

An average of 23 c**onversations** to answer to every morning. Messages received in around **10 different languages. In total 706 messages in this period.**
175 new numbers contacted us on our hotline.

FAMILIES' STORIES

During the reporting period we assisted some separated families in the process of family reunifications !

We met a woman and her 6 year old son from Syria. During their journey she has been separated from her husband and his older sons. When she arrived in Greece, her husband and his older sons was already in Germany and had international protection.

We accompanied her and her son during the family reunification procedure. Together, we collected the needed documents to apply for a family reunification, and sent the application to the competent authorities. She described the procedures involved often extremely exhausted, while also being necessary.

After some time, she received a decision from the German authorities accepting the transfer! Their journey to Germany was then organized.

She and her son are now in Germany, reunited with her husband, as well as the two sons of her husband ! She told us that she was very happy and at ease when she left the island, though she was very attached to it.



MORE STORIES & GOOD NEWS!

We also received good news from a couple and their 3 children we assisted some months ago.

In March, we met a couple and their 3 minor children from Sudan, and assisted them during their asylum procedure.

Firstly we prepared the family for their asylum interviews. They decided to leave Sudan because of the war and of the persecutions they will faced because they refused to enrolled their sons in the forces. They all had witnessed the war and some member of their families were killed because of it.

During their second attempt from Turkey to Greece, they experienced pushback and violence from the Greek authorities. The family was sent back to Turkey after entering the Greek territory and was then detained for some days by the Turkish authorities, where they also experienced violence.

While doing the preparation with them, we noticed how vulnerable they were due to the many hardships and struggles they had faced before arriving to Greece. They had experienced war, lost loved ones, as well as police violence and pushbacks. One of the member of the family also had difficulty communicating with strangers.

Because of how traumatizing their journey was and of the several persecutions they faced in their life, we ensured our lawyer was present during all the interviews of the family to support them. We also made sure they received the necessary psychological support they needed and collaborated with MSF on their case.

The whole family has now received a decision granting them refugee status, and are building their lives in Greece !



UPDATES ADVOCACY

Working together to protect access to rights

Alongside individual legal assistance, the Samos Legal Centre continued to work with other organisations on the island and at national level to document rights violations, exchange information and develop joint advocacy strategies.

Documenting detention and conditions in the CCAC

The Centre worked with other Organizations in Samos to alert the CCAC regarding the living conditions and the violations of the rights of the residents like done several times in the previous years.

The Centre also continued collaborating with the **Aegean Network** on the network's quarterly monitoring of conditions and procedures in Closed Controlled Access Centres on the Greek islands. In September 2026, the Aegean Network released its second monitoring report of 2026 concerning the situation in the CCACs on the Greek islands.

Building collective advocacy on Samos

Throughout the quarter, the team participated in the Samos Advocacy Group, working with other organisations to identify common concerns and coordinate advocacy strategies.
In **the previous months**, the group continued developing collective advocacy strategies, including the collection of joint testimonies on different issues affecting people seeking protection. A focus was made on the violations of the rights of the residents of the CCAC, especially the refusal to vaccinate children, the barriers for single parents with minor children to exit the CCAC, as well as the denial of food and water to residents with special reception needs. **In August**, a post has been made in our social media to alert on all of those issues.

The Centre also continued working with other NGOs present at the island on fingerprinting practices, collecting testimonies and documenting individual experiences as a basis for future advocacy and potential complaints.

Engaging with decision-makers and partners

The Centre participated regularly in the **Protection Working Group, Legal Aid Network, Aegean NGO Network and local multi-agency meetings**, allowing the team to share information, coordinate referrals and contribute to collective responses to developments affecting asylum seekers.

To read more in details about these advocacy effort, feel free to consult linktree where updates and full statements are regularly posted.

TEAM UPDATES

September marked the end of Marine's experience on the Samos Legal Centre. Marine DAHI had joined the Centre in June as a legal caseworker and helped us with the the legal and advocacy activities of the Centre !



With a wealth of experience in Greece working with people on the move and doing advocacy for organizations in France, Marine was a real addition to the team.
Her determination, attentiveness, and creativity were more than appreciated by the team !

We thank Marine for her work over the last few months, and wish her all the best for her new professionnal adventure !

In September, the team has been joined by Myriam BEN SALEM VIEDMA the new caseworker, whose dynamism and enthusiasm are really appreciated by the team !



In August, Anne LUTUN the executive director of ASF France visited the team in the field for some days. This provided an opportunity to discuss the situation on the island, meet with our partners, and strengthen or develop collaborations with local stakeholders !

SUPPORT THE PROJECT

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU – AND A CALL TO KEEP GOING TOGETHER

First and foremost: **THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!**
Whether you've been following us since the early days or just recently joined our community, your support and encouragement mean the world to us. This project has only been possible because of the solidarity and trust of people like you, who believe (like we do) that everyone deserves dignity, information, and access to their rights !

Today, we face a new chapter. Resources are shrinking, needs are growing, and we are doing our best to adapt. To keep going, we have launched a fundraising campaign on ***HelloAsso.*** This campaign is not just about covering immediate costs; it's about building the foundation that will carry us into the future.

If you can, we invite you to support us once more:

- by making a contribution, no matter the size,
- by sharing the campaign with friends, colleagues, or networks who may want to help,
- or simply by staying connected and spreading the word.

Every gesture makes a difference. Together, we can ensure that this project continues to stand by those who need it most.

Thank you for walking this path with us.

Support the Samos Legal Centre Project !

Direct link to our Fundraising campaign

Follow us and support our work on social media

samoslegalcentre_asffrance