

# THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the 6th edition of the Samos Legal Centre's newsletter! This month our team has been busy supporting new arrivals with interview preparations and with submissions before the European Court of Human Rights for beneficiaries who had lived in the 'jungle' of Samos Refugee Camp during their pregnancies. We include case studies of beneficiaries and celebrate some success stories this month!



## EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SUBMISSIONS

In 2020, when the population of Vathy Refugee camp was 10 times over its official capacity, interim measure requests were submitted to the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of 6 pregnant ASF France beneficiaries. Each woman was at an advanced stage of her pregnancy but still living in extremely challenging tent or cabin facilities in the informal 'jungle' area of the camp.



The Court granted these interim measure requests, urging the Greek state to prevent the imminent risk of irreparable harm to the applicants by securing them access to healthcare and accommodation. The ASF France team monitored the situation on the ground, and submitted further applications when some of the women's circumstances remained unchanged. Last week, extensive arguments were drafted and sent to the Court by a team of 10 ASF France volunteers (working in Samos, France and Belgium) asking that the harm suffered by the women during their pregnancies in Samos be recognized as a violation of their rights in 2020, and damages paid as compensation.

## ASYLUM STORY

### B\* AND D\*, SIERRA LEONE

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B\* and D\* first contacted the Legal Centre for support in December. Survivors of torture and police brutality, they had arrived in Samos by boat with their one-month-old baby.



*"We left because B\*'s family wanted to kill us. They had promised her hand in marriage to her uncle, the chief of our village, who was much older. When she married me instead, her uncle was furious. She was 7 months pregnant with our child and he ordered her to have an abortion. One night, her family came to our house with machetes. They beat me up and the next day, the police arrived, handcuffed me and brought me to the police station. There were no charges, no reading of my rights. They kept me in a small cell with many other people. Later they beat me, accusing of stealing another man's wife. They only let me out when I signed a document, swearing that we would divorce. We realised then how powerful her uncle was, if even the police were not going to protect us." - D\**

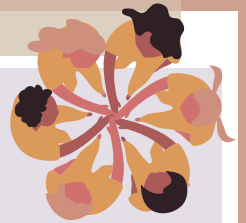
*"D\* was reluctant to leave, because we only knew our village and had never travelled to another country outside Sierra Leone. But I knew that if we stayed, my family would force this abortion, and I wouldn't survive it. So we fled, travelling first to Turkey and then here to Greece. Of course it was very scary. My baby was just one month old when we crossed, so I was very afraid.*

*We contacted you to help us prepare for the interview. You made us feel calm and prepared for the questions that the asylum service asked us. When your story is complicated like ours, it is hard to know where to start, but you guided us to tell every detail." - B\**

*"How did we feel when we learnt about the positive decision? Happy. Oh just so so happy. And relief, like we can relax for the first time in many months. I don't know what we will do next, but for today we are just so happy." - B\**

**B\* and D\* have started the process to receive their Greek residence cards. This month, three ASF France beneficiaries from Sierra Leone received refugee status in Samos.**





R\* and M\* from Sierra Leone  
*"The questions you asked us were very similar to the real asylum interview, so we felt prepared"*

[Read the full](#)  
 → [interview here](#)



M\* from Afghanistan, received his travel documents this month and could finally leave Samos to reunite with her daughter

[Read the full](#)  
 → [interview here](#)

## 20 The number of the month

In March, the Samos Legal Centre welcomed 26 new beneficiaries, 18 men and 8 women. 15 were new arrivals to Samos, primarily from Cameroon, who requested support preparing for their asylum interviews.

In total, 20 interview preparations were carried out, lasting around 2 hours each, to inform applicants of their rights and prepare them for the interview questions.

*"The preparation helped me understand what asylum actually means, and the importance of the interview. I never thought that I would have an interview like that in my life! You reminded me of the importance of dates and being specific, and because the preparation was so detailed, I felt very prepared on the day."* M- Cameroon.



## An overview of appeals



When an asylum seeker receives a rejection on their application, they have the right to appeal this decision. In Samos, the deadline for most applicants to appeal a rejection is just 10 calendar days. State lawyers are available to support with appeals in Samos, but the pressure on the capacity of these representatives often means that their time with appellants is short, and communication is limited.

When a beneficiary reaches out for support with their appeal, an ASF France lawyer meets them to explain the reasons they were rejected, and to prepare their defence. Extensive research into the country of origin of the applicant is carried out by the caseworkers before the lawyer can submit the appeal before the court in Athens. A request to prevent the deportation of the applicant is also sent. In March, 6 appointments were conducted to prepare two appeals for ASF France beneficiaries.