


MAY 2022

# THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



 Welcome to the 8th edition of the Samos Legal Centre's newsletter! May was the busiest month of 2022 so far for the Samos team, as detailed in the 'Number of the Month.' 7 beneficiaries received positive decisions and discussed their experiences with us, and we provide updates directly from the Zervou 'Closed-Controlled' facility.



## TESTIMONY- POSITIVE DECISIONS!

“That Monday night, after I got my positive decision, I had the best sleep of my life!”

- A\*, Sierra Leone.



When ASF France asks its beneficiaries for feedback on how they felt after receiving their positive decisions, applicants almost always express immense feelings of relief. The stress and insecurity of living an undocumented life in Turkey, coupled with the months of waiting for an answer on their asylum request in Greece, takes a significant psychological toll. “The most important thing is having papers and living a legal life” is expressed by many.

A\* from Sierra Leone, is one such applicant. After requesting interview preparation support from the Samos Legal Centre, he was accompanied by an ASF France lawyer on the day of his interview, and received a positive decision last week. “With this decision, I feel like I can become part of the Greek people now. I can get a job, do the things I’m supposed to do, and be a free person.”

With refugee status, A\* can receive a 3 year residence permit and travel document. He has the right to work, but must leave Zervou camp within 1 month. ASF France is committed to informing applicants of their rights all throughout the asylum procedure.

## 87 The number of the month

This month, 226 consultations took place in the Samos Legal Centre. The ASF France team worked at full capacity, with 87 interview preparations taking place for 50 asylum seekers (23 women and 27 men), to prepare them for their asylum interviews. These preparation sessions aim to inform applicants of their rights, the questions they can expect to be asked in the interview, and the criteria they will be assessed on. As ASF France beneficiaries frequently report that the asylum interview is the first interview they have in their lives, these preparations help to guide them in telling their stories in a clear and comprehensive way.

The 2 ASF France lawyers in Samos submitted 39 requests to the authorities in May. These requests concerned urgent medical transfer cases, applications to link families' cases together, submit and receive documents and decisions on behalf of applicants, and advocate to the authorities to accommodate increasingly vulnerable applicants. To our knowledge, at least 8 of ASF France's beneficiaries received positive decisions in May.



## Updates from the camp

### **Water :**

From the 6th to the 23rd of May, there were restrictions on the running water supply in the Samos Closed Controlled Access Centre due to a technical issue regarding the water pump. From the 13th of May onwards, residents were supplemented with three 1.5L bottles of water each day. Given the rising temperatures on Samos, the lack of consistent access to water raised serious health and hygiene concerns.



### **Doctor :**

For a third month, there continued to be no permanent doctor supporting the camp residents in Zervou. MSF operated a mobile clinic 3 days a week within the facility, but vulnerability assessments, as required by law, could not be carried out without a state-appointed physician. The asylum service cancelled and postponed several interviews as a result, often on the very day of the interview. This created significant confusion, distress and uncertainty amongst ASF France beneficiaries, who expressed that they could not keep mentally preparing, only to have their appointment cancelled on the same day.

### **Medical Transfers :**

No medical transfers to hospitals on the mainland occurred in May, owing to speculated budget cut in the reception centres of Greece. Many vulnerable asylum seekers were told to pay for their own ferry tickets, despite having never received any cash assistance and the means to afford a ticket, and without any guarantee of being accommodated on the mainland. Despite repeated requests to the authorities and the UNHCR to relocate these applicants, none of ASF France's beneficiaries received a medical transfer this month.