

JUNE 2022

THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the 9th edition of the Samos Legal Centre's newsletter! This month continued to be one of the busiest so far this year for the ASF France team, with many new arrivals and requests for interview preparations. The team continued to collect feedback from its beneficiaries and work to ensure the right to seek asylum is safeguarded.

Asylum stories

"Of course, this decision means so much and I felt super happy when I received it. I finally felt safe "

- A, Samos Legal Centre beneficiary.*



In June, as more ASF France beneficiaries received positive decisions on their asylum applications, concerns about imminent eviction from the Zervou refugee camp were continuously raised as the primary challenge facing newly recognized refugees.

With just 30 days to leave the camp after receiving their positive decisions, many face homelessness while still waiting to receive their Greek residence ID cards. These documents permit refugees access to the labour market and integration supports. As the waiting times to receive these documents increase over the summer months, ASF France and its partners on Samos have raised concerns about the rising number of unaccommodated refugees in Samos to both the UNHCR and camp manager.

"You helped to give me courage, because I was very afraid of that asylum interview, but you reminded me that I am a strong woman and you gave me the courage to go on.

But now I have just 20 days left to leave the camp. I am still waiting for my documents, like my Greek residence ID and tax number.

I can't rent a place to live because I don't have any money. And I cannot work to get money because my documents aren't ready yet. So what can I do?"

Since February, the ASF France team in Samos has observed that its beneficiaries who require urgent medical treatment on the mainland no longer have the costs of these transfers covered by the authorities. Instead, they are directed to pay for their ferry tickets from Samos themselves and 'self-transfer' to other accommodation sites. For many vulnerable camp residents without the physical and financial means, this represents an unsurmountable barrier to receiving the treatment they need. This is particularly the case for applicants who are not eligible or recipients of cash assistance in Greece.

ASF France has raised its concerns to the UNHCR and the camp management about this significant practical barrier to receiving medical treatment for asylum seekers in Samos, since becoming aware of this practice. Despite this, facilitated medical transfers remain on hold in Samos.

F* first contacted the ASF France team in March. He was HIV positive and unable to receive treatment for his condition in Samos. He reported noticing decreasing energy levels and changes in his skin pigmentation while living without medication.

For two month, ASF France submitted weekly requests to authorities, asking for [FOR MORE](#) for treatment



1 6 4 The number of the month

In June, 164 new arrivals were registered at the Zervou 'Closed-Controlled' refugee camp in Samos. The ASF France team worked at full capacity to ensure applicants were informed of their rights throughout the procedure and prepared for their asylum interviews. In total, 242 consultations were conducted.

The team welcomed 41 new beneficiaries, primarily from Sierra Leone, DRC, Syria, Guinea and Cameroon. 82 interview preparations were carried out for 48 asylum seekers. For a further month, there continued to be no permanent doctor in the camp, resulting in many interviews being postponed because applicants had not received their vulnerability assessment yet, a requirement under EU law.

The 2 ASF France lawyers in Samos submitted 42 requests to the authorities in June, asking for medical transfers for applicants, requesting changes of personal data and interview transcripts, and advocating for applicants to be accommodated and their asylum claims registered on Samos. To our knowledge, at least 11 of ASF France's beneficiaries received positive decisions in June.



Samos Island Weekly Snapshot

Sea arrivals

This week, Samos island saw 0 arrivals, a decrease from last week's 3.

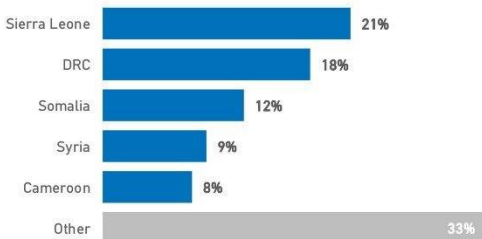
The average of the daily arrivals on Samos island for this week is 0.



Population in the CCAC

Currently, 411 refugees and migrants reside in the Closed Controlled Access Center.

Most of them are from Sierra Leone (21%), DRC (18%) and Somalia (12%). Men account for 60% of the population, women for 23% and children for 17%.



Entry Points



The UNHCR 'weekly' snapshot provides a breakdown of the nationalities living in the camp, including arrivals and transfers.

21% of asylum seekers and refugees in Samos originate from Sierra Leone, 18% from Democratic Republic of the Congo and 12% from Somalia.

Men account for 60% of the population, women for 23% and children for 17%.



Sign the petition

June 7th marked one year since the Greek government declared that Turkey is a 'safe third country' for people seeking asylum from Afghanistan, Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh, in addition to Syrians.

In practice, this means that asylum seekers from those countries are first interviewed separately about Turkey, irrespective of how long they spent there. They must demonstrate that Turkey is not safe for them in order to be 'admitted' and interviewed about their own country. For the many asylum seekers who merely transited through Turkey and stayed less than 1-2 months, they struggle to provide the Greek Asylum service with the necessary proof that they would not be safe there, given the short duration of their stay.

Since this decision, the Samos Legal Centre team has witnessed a huge increase in applicants from those countries receiving rejections from the asylum service. In 2021, nearly 6000 rejection decisions were issued based on this decision, yet no returns to Turkey have taken place since March 2020. Applicants are confined under geographical restrictions on Samos and never given an opportunity to express the reasons why they left their own country.

Avocats sans Frontières France, along with organisations and civil society groups, call for the revocation of this Joint Ministerial Decision issued one year ago. [To add your voice: please sign the petition available](#)

