

NOVEMBER 2022

THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the 14th edition of the Samos Legal Centre newsletter!



This month, despite the beginning of the winter period in Samos, over 300 new asylum seekers arrived to the island. The ASF France team maintained a consistent level of activity despite the approaching winter months, advocating bilaterally to the authorities and delivering group interview preparation workshops. Read more below.

Visit from the Headquarters team!

This month, the field team in Samos was visited by Mélanie Canovas (Project Officer) and Ingrid Metton (co-founder of the Legal Centre and board member of ASF France) between 19-23rd November. During their visit, meetings with the Legal Centre's partners in Samos (MSF, I HAVE RIGHTS, UNHCR, The Human Rights Legal Project) took place, in addition to individualised meetings with field team members. The activities and capacities of the project, challenges, perspectives for 2023 and collaborations were discussed.

The visiting members participated in a UNHCR-facilitated Protection Working Group, attended by the Asylum Service and Camp Management, and witnessed the bilateral interventions of ASF France in advocating for asylum seekers' rights and procedural guarantees. They visited both the old refugee camp in Vathy, and the new Closed-Controlled Access Centre in Zervou, to witness first-hand the dramatic change in the context in Samos and the 'detention-like' structure of the new facility. Both the field and visiting members had an opportunity to meet in-person after months and even years of online correspondence, and reported on the numerous benefits of the visit in strengthening collaboration within the project.

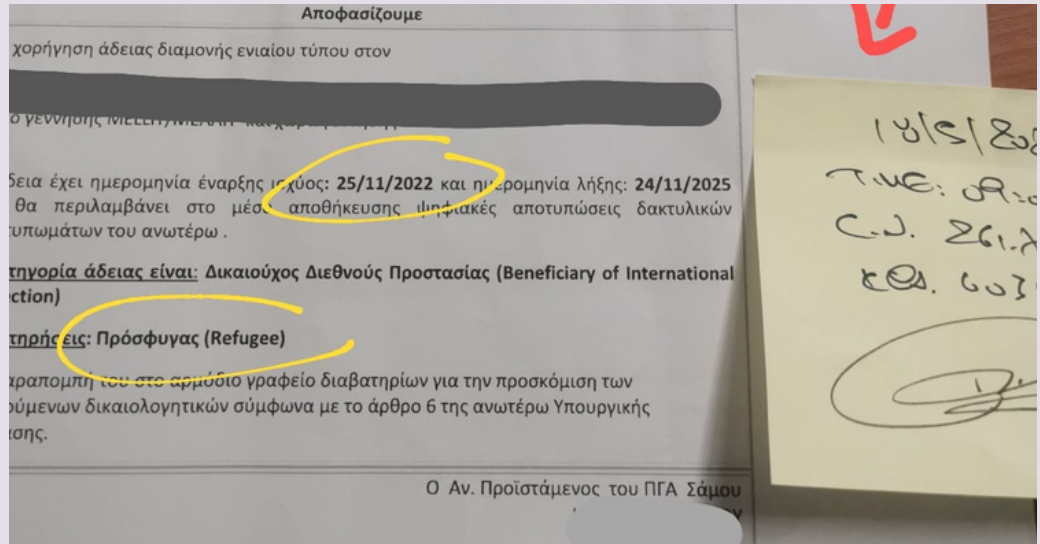
All team members pictured above on the visiting team's final night in Samos!

Delays in issuance of Greek ID cards and travel documents

In November, the Samos Legal Centre team continued its bilateral advocacy to the Greek Asylum authorities and camp management, to raise awareness of legal and administrative barriers faced by asylum seekers and refugees on the island. This month, a major issue identified was the long wait times that recognised refugees faced to receive their Greek residence ID cards.

As pictured, an applicant who received refugee status on 25/11/2022 will wait until 18/5/2023 to start the procedure for his ID card at the Samos police station.

During this time, the applicant will have difficulty securing accommodation and legal work without his ID card.



ASF France is in communications with the UNHCR about this issue.

Group interview preparations for applicants from Darfur

This month, the ASF France team faced a steep increase in requests for interview preparation support from Arabic speakers. A significant number were registered as Sudanese, but as they were from Darfur and had never had access to national documents or ID cards, they were legally stateless.



ASF France concentrated its efforts on ensuring applicants understood the concept of statelessness and how to present their claims, and attended at several in interviews that interviewers were aware of the discriminatory treatment of people from Darfur and minority tribes in Sudan.

With many applicants being called for interviews with little notice, having no phones or literacy levels to contact legal actors, and given the limited number of Arabic interpreters available, ASF France adapted by conducting group sessions to inform these applicants about the importance of a lack of identity documents in the asylum process, their rights and the kind of questions to expect. Over 42 applicants attended these two sessions.

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The number of the month

79 sessions were conducted this month to manage asylum requests of beneficiaries. The two ASF France caseworkers invested considerable time in checking-in daily with the Centre's beneficiaries, responding to their questions, updating their files, and monitoring developments in their cases. With 305 new arrivals this month, the team worked hard to ensure applicants had access to reliable legal advice and information.

184 consultations were conducted in total, including 25 interview preparations and two large group preparation sessions for Sudanese applicants. 9 interview accompaniments took place and 49 requests were sent to the authorities to advocate for vulnerable persons.

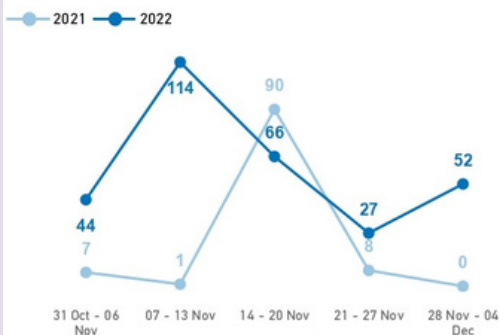


Samos Island Weekly Snapshot

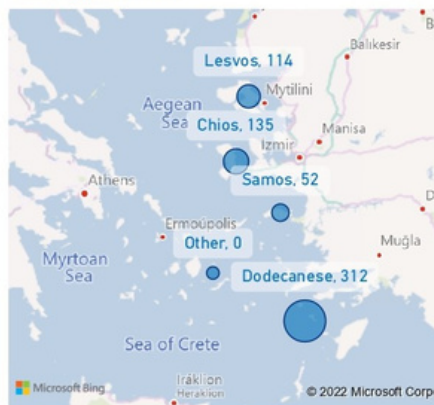
Sea arrivals

This week, Samos island saw 52 arrivals, an increase from last week's 27.

The average of the daily arrivals on Samos island for this week is 7.



Entry Points



The latest figures state that 1145 asylum seekers are refugees live in Samos.

305 new arrivals were registered this month, an increase of 142 compared to October. 225 people were transferred from Samos to facilities on the mainland this month.

UNHCR figures estimate that:

- 48% of the camp population originate from the State of Palestine;
 - 13% from Sierra Leone;
 - 11% from Eritrea;
 - 9% from Sudan;
 - 4% from Somalia and 16% from 'Other' unspecified countries.
- It stated that men account for 78% of the population, women for 11% and children for 11%.

Population in the CCAC

Currently, 1,071 refugees and migrants reside in the Closed Controlled Access Center.

Most of them are from State of Palestine (48%), Sierra Leone (13%) and Eritrea (11%). Men account for 78% of the population, women for 11% and children for 11%.

