

# THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



*Welcome to the 20th edition of the Samos Legal Centre Newsletter.*



*In May, shocking video footage of pushbacks from the Greek islands was published by the New York Times, and the Samos team focused on collecting testimonies of rights violations within the Closed-Controlled Access Centre. The team welcomed a new staff member and engaged in training on trauma-informed lawyering. Read more below.*

## Video footage released of pushbacks by the Greek authorities

On Friday 12th May, the New York Times published what is likely to be the first video evidence of Greece's illegal pushback practice. The [video footage](#) showed a group of 12 asylum seekers being driven in an unmarked white van to a remote spot on Lesbos island, before being forced into a high-speed inflatable boat by men whose facial features are concealed by balaclavas. The dinghy then transfers them to a Hellenic coast guard vessel, which proceeds to abandon them on a raft in the middle of the Aegean Sea. There they are left adrift before being picked up by the Turkish coast guard. This footage emerged one week before the Greek Parliamentary elections on May 21st, in which the prime minister, Kyriákos Mitsotákis, [beat the leftwing opposition](#), but fell short of an absolute majority, leading to a second round of voting on June 25th.

The European Commission responded to the report by sending a formal request to Athens to conduct a fully independent investigation and said that it is ready to take "formal steps, as appropriate" without elaborating further. The ASF France team notes that the footage matches the testimonies of its beneficiaries, who regularly describe surviving multiple pushbacks before they had managed to successfully register their asylum requests in Samos.



Footage shows asylum seekers being forcibly expelled from Greece - video

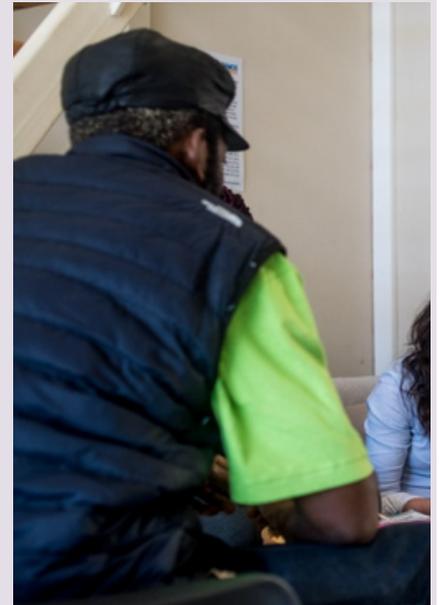
## Testimonials from applicants on living conditions in the CCAC

In May, the number of people managing to successfully register their asylum requests in Samos remained low. The Legal Centre refocused its capacities as a result and attended more frequently at the community centres on the island to collect testimonies from applicants living in the Closed-Controlled Access Centre (CCAC). Applicants are questioned about their sense of security in the facility, their well-being, and the material reception conditions they are being provided with, which includes food and clothing. The following are some of the responses received:

*"When I first arrived, I waited 15-17 days before receiving permission to leave the camp. I wore the same clothes every day, the ones I had been wearing in the boat. I washed them at night with a bottle of water. Some people received one t-shirt and one pair of trousers from the camp management when they arrived, but that was it. An NGO gave me clothes. Another NGO gave me underwear and hygiene products."*

*"We usually receive a piece of fruit, like an apple, twice per week. We never receive vegetables. I often feel hungry. We have to adapt- if you are somebody who receives cash assistance, you can buy more food with that. But I arrived in January and did not receive any cash until April, so I did not have this option."*

Read more [here](#).



## Professional development- trauma informed lawyering

This month, the Samos team began a 6-month training by [AMERA International](#) on providing legal services to people suffering from psychological trauma. As many of the Centre's beneficiaries have suffered moderate to severe forms of trauma, such as torture, sexual and gender-based violence or pushbacks, this programme is especially relevant. It aims to train legal actors on the different psychological disorders that beneficiaries may suffer from and their impact on memory.

The team has acquired knowledge on how best to assist beneficiaries to avoid re-traumatisation or secondary trauma and has already put this training into practice during interview preparations and group workshops with asylum seekers.



## Expansion of ASF France team in Samos

This month the ASF France team was delighted to welcome back one of its former volunteer caseworkers, this time in a new role. As the Legal & Technical Assistant, Caroline will provide essential support to the field team and lead its advocacy activities and geopolitical monitoring of the context. She described how it feels to rejoin the Legal Centre:

*“I worked as a caseworker between April and June 2022 and learned a lot! This work requires both a social and legal approach, which I had never experienced before. At that time, Covid-19 restrictions were still affecting our work, but now I see that our biggest challenge is trying to predict migration flows and the actions of the authorities. With no predictability, it can be very challenging to plan our activities at the Legal Centre.*

*I know that having this additional capacity of the Legal & Technical Assistant will ensure that the team can maintain our advocacy activities in pressurised times of many arrivals and that my past experiences and interpersonal skills will contribute a lot to this role.”*

Read more [here](#).



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## Number of the month

1198 consultations were conducted at the Samos Legal Centre in May. The team invested considerable time in following-up on its cases, as many applicants (approximately 216) were transferred from Samos to refugee camps on mainland Greece this month. 139 sessions were conducted to manage these cases and queries from applicants.

The team conducted 3 legal information sessions at community centres on the island, attended by 52 asylum seekers. An additional workshop, aimed at explaining the legal procedure to international volunteers from non-legal NGOs, was delivered online and attended by 25 external volunteers from 5 partner organisations in Samos. These workshops ensure that volunteers understand the importance of legal aid for new arrivals, and that organisations on the island work together to deliver joined-up supportive services.

