

# THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



*Welcome to the 25th edition of the Samos Legal Centre newsletter!*

*As asylum seekers continued to reach Samos and be detained in the Closed-Controlled Access Centre, the ASF France team submitted a further complaint to the Greek Ombudsman and advocated for faster registration times. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) released a compelling report about pushback practices from Samos, and testimony was gathered from the Legal Centre's applicants about their experiences in Samos. Read more below.*

## Continued de facto detention of new arrivals

In October 1192 newly arrived asylum seekers were placed into 'de facto' detention in the Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) in Samos. For a further month, conditions in the camp remained dire, with reports of severe overcrowding, no access to clean clothing or adequate bedding, limited food and water and restricted access to medical and legal aid. Average waiting times for registrations had extended to 35-40 days, during which time new arrivals could not exit from the facility. The Samos Legal Centre hotline was operated by 2 legal officers working at full capacity to ensure each request, averaging 40 new conversations per day were followed up.

Among the messages received were :

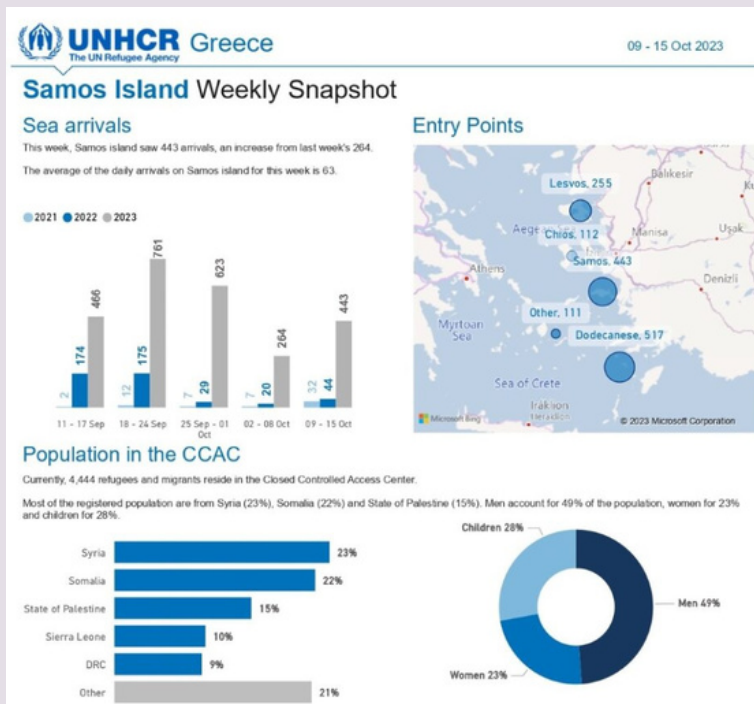


The ASF France submitted a further complaint to the Greek Ombudsman this month for 30 vulnerable applicants who had been detained for 25-45 days in the CCAC without adequate material reception conditions. A response from the Ombudsman is now pending for both submissions.

## Release of MSF report 'In Plain Sight: the human cost of migration policies and violent practices at Greek sea borders.'

On 2nd November, MSF, the only remaining independent medical actor in Samos, released a compelling report, which draws on two years of its operations on the islands of Lesbos and Samos. The report compiles testimonies of its patients and its field teams, and points to patterns of violence committed against individuals landing on Greek shores. It demonstrates a recurring practice of violent pushbacks from land and sea, often involving physical assault, handcuffing, informal detention, and strip searches, as well as boat towing and deliberately damage to the mechanical components of the boat by masked individuals and/or uniformed officials. MSF calls for an end to these violent practices and pushes for policies and practices that place the health, wellbeing, and protection of new arrivals at its centre. Read the report in English [here](#).

## Population updates



According to the Ministry of Migration on 1st November 2023, [3,901](#) asylum seekers resided in the Samos CCAC. There were **1192 new arrivals** in October and **1486 applicants** were transferred from Samos to reception centres on the mainland.

The latest UNHCR snapshot, covering the period 9-15th October, states that **23% of the population originate from Syria, 22% from Somalia, 15% from the State of Palestine**. Men account for 49% of the population, women for 23% and children for 28%.

1486

## Number of the month

1486 asylum seekers were transferred from Samos to mainland reception facilities after completion of their initial registration procedures this month. For legal actors on the islands, follow-up with these cases can be challenging, as applicants are often relocated at very short notice, immediately prior to or after their asylum interview, and to locations which are 'legal deserts' ie. devoid of available legal aid and support. The ASF France team invests considerable time in ensuring applicants are aware of developments in their legal cases, informed of their rights, and supported throughout the procedure. 96 case management consultations were carried out by the Samos Legal Centre team in October.



237 consultations were conducted in total, including support for 3 appeal cases, 56 interview preparations, 3 accompaniments at interviews and 10 requests to the authorities on behalf of vulnerable applicants. 67 new service users were welcomed to the Samos Legal Centre for support in October.

## Good news : the case of S\*

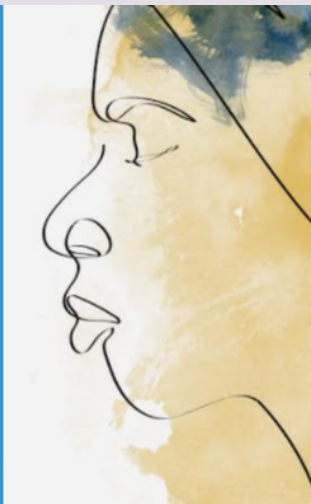


ASF FRANCE

**Testimonial**

“It’s not easy, living in the camp. You feel like you are in prison. But every time I needed you, I was sending you a message and you were answering immediately, kindly and politely. You’re treating me like a human being.”

S\*- recognised refugee



This month, the team celebrated S\*, from Cameroon, receiving international protection in Samos.

*“When I contacted you, it was to ask for help on how to better prepare myself to tell my story. At first, I felt really bad during the preparation appointments. I was too weak from all the trauma in Cameroon. But you really gave me the help and the support I needed to be able to face the asylum service.*

*Once I was in the interview room, when I started to tell my story and answer the questions, everything went a bit better, especially because I had my lawyer next to me. She wasn't allowed to speak, but the simple fact of having somebody there gave me a lot of courage.*

*Living in Samos camp was not easy at all. I had the same daily life - not going out, always being locked up. You get up in the morning, you sit there, you can't go out and I had a real problem because I couldn't fall asleep. I had nightmares and a lot of insomnia. I would sleep for just two hours a night sometimes. It must have been because I couldn't go out, just to clear my head. When I received my positive result, it was a great joy for me. I know that I'm finally free to move around as I wish in the street and in the country of Greece, which is now my home. I'm free here.”*