

NOVEMBER 2023

THE SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the 26th edition of the Samos Legal Centre newsletter!

November recorded less new arrivals than the past few months but, unfortunately, the same practices and living conditions in the camp remain. ASF France said goodbye to Blaithin, their former Project Manager, and welcomes the new one. The project signed a crucial civil society statement advocating for the removal of Article 5 in the proposed EU screening regulation.

Read more below!

THANK YOU BLÁITHÍN !

ASF France expresses sincere gratitude to Blaithin Quigley for her exceptional dedication to the project for the past 3 years. First, as the Legal and Technical Assistant from January 2021 to July 2021 and subsequently as the Project Manager of the Samos Legal Centre from July 2021 to November 2023. Her leadership was crucial during challenging times, including financial strain and operational hurdles. Blaithin successfully managed the center through significant changes, such as the camp displacement, CCAC opening, movement restrictions, increasing arrivals, and Covid protocols. Her efforts ensured the smooth operation and financial stability of the project, overcoming the absence of an assistant during a period of financial difficulty at the beginning of her project manager contract. In 2022, Blaithin was [interviewed](#)

and shared insights into her background, motivations, and the challenges faced in providing meaningful legal support to asylum seekers. Working alongside a dedicated team, she found joy in the resilience, commitment, and good humor of her colleagues. She saw her role as one removing obstacles, emphasizing strong communication, collaboration, and supporting for self-care.

As Blaithin concludes her contract, ASF France acknowledges her invaluable contributions and welcomes Priscille Duflos as the new Project Manager. With previous experience on Samos and work with Equal Legal Aid in Thessaloniki, Priscille brings a deep understanding of the context. In just one month, she has already demonstrated her ability to settle into the role, and we anticipate continued success under her leadership

Headquarters' Mission to Samos

For the third time since the creation of the Samos Legal Centre, ASF France organised a field visit from headquarters to Samos. The objective was to assess the project's progress after nearly five years of implementation. The mission aimed at monitoring the project's day-to-day operations, facilitating a seamless transition between the outgoing and incoming project managers, and engaging with the team through meaningful discussions. It was also a way for Mélanie, the Program Officer at HQ, to gain a deeper understanding of asylum-seekers' challenges thanks to productive interactions with the team and external actors. During the 5 days mission, Mélanie was able to meet with the I Have Rights coordinator, the Human Rights Legal Project coordinator and assist to the protection working group at UNHCR as well as at the NGOs in Samos coordination meeting. She also managed to organise one on one meetings with each member of the team and of course to enjoy a team dinner ! (cf picture)



Update on the situation in Samos



According to the Ministry of Migration on 30th November 2023, 3488 asylum seekers resided in the Samos CCAC. There were 110 new arrivals in November and 672 applicants were transferred from Samos to reception centres on the mainland. As in the previous month, the newly arrived asylum seekers were placed into 'de facto' detention in the CCAC in Samos. Unfortunately, the conditions in the camp have not improved from the past month as there still was no running water, nor clean clothing distribution meaning that arrivals, all of whom came by boat to Samos, must remain in the same clothing for more than one month. On top of that, the access to medical and legal aid remains very limited. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) recently described the conditions as 'extremely concerning' and underlined 'a lack of access to medical care, degrading hygiene conditions and limited access to basic services provisions.'

228

Number of the month

In November, the Samos Legal Centre team conducted in total 228 consultations, addressing various aspects of legal support for asylum seekers. This includes 64 case management sessions, 59 preparations to asylum interviews, 2 interview accompaniment, 22 requests to the authorities on behalf of vulnerable applicants, and 2 consultations supporting Dublin cases.

96 new applicants were welcomed to the Samos Legal Centre in November, 60 of them were men and 36 women.

It is worth noticing that 672 individuals were transferred from Samos to mainland reception facilities following the completion of their initial registration procedures. This increased movement

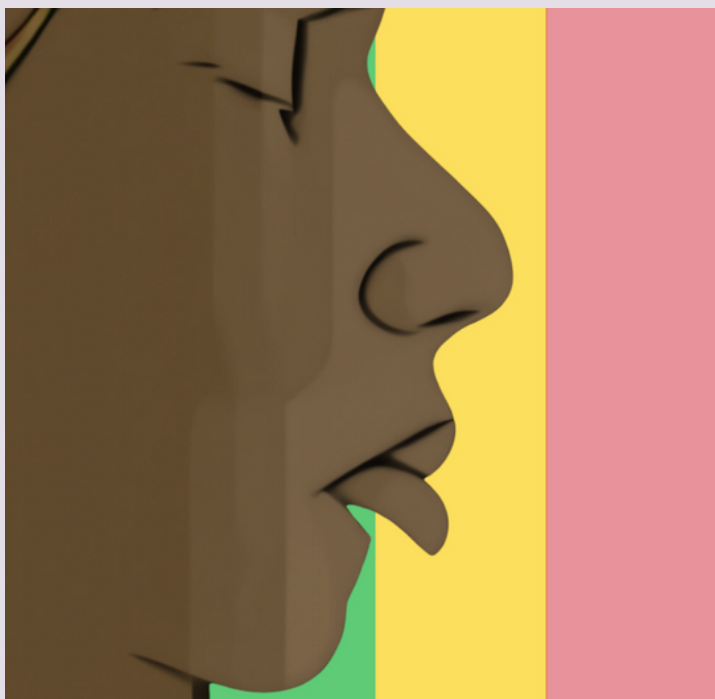


poses challenges for follow-up, as applicants are often relocated at short notice, either immediately before or after their asylum interviews, frequently to 'legal deserts,' areas lacking available legal aid and support. As highlighted in the October Newsletter, the increased transfers significantly impacted the team's ability to effectively follow cases. However, ASF is part of a legal network collaborating with other organisations on the mainland that keeps reminding of the importance of these follow-up. Indeed, these organization mphasize the critical role of preparing asylum seekers before their transfer, underscoring its importance considering numerous 'legal deserts,' on the mainland. This preparation becomes particularly valuable, given the limitations faced by organizations on the mainland in providing continued support to individuals after their transfers.

Joint Civil Society Statement on Article 5 of the EU Screening Regulation

ASF-France has joined a crucial civil society statement, written with Border Violence Monitoring Network and Plateform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants, and signed by 81 other actors, advocating for the removal of Article 5 in the proposed EU screening regulation within the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The contested article expands screening procedures beyond border apprehensions to all individuals on member states' territories, raising concerns about discriminatory profiling, arbitrary apprehension, potential de facto detentions, and limitations on assessing reasons for non-qualification for international protection. This move threatens the non-refoulement principle. The joint statement aims to address these issues, emphasizing the potential for racial profiling, de-facto detention, and facilitating pushbacks, particularly drawing attention to challenges observed in Greece.

Asylum stories – E*



At the end of May 2023, E* arrived in Samos from Mali. His asylum interview was scheduled in June and our team supported him with interview preparation consultations.

Being illiterate, E* faces additional struggles in the legal procedure. Indeed, the asylum interview is even more stressful since it is impossible for him to read communications from the asylum service or take notes to remember the information provided by legal actors. He has to remember everything !

It is a real challenge and E* was very stressed. He had his interview at the end of June, and shared with us that he was doing worse and worse due to waiting and being stuck here,” to use his words. E* spent the last three years of his life in hiding to escape jihadist attacks, with which Mali is surrounded on both sides.

The attacks at the beginning of 2023, before E*'s departure, were essential for him. This November, he finally received a positive decision for international protection in Greece. E* was very happy and will be able to begin the long journey towards building a new life in Greece. In these moments, we have proof at the Legal Centre that international law and international solidarity are crucial to progress towards other-oriented and mutually protective societies.

