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SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Asylum in Greece : a shifting landscape

In March 2025, Greece's Council of State annulled the designation of Turkey as a "safe third country" for asylum seekers from Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Somalia. This landmark decision challenges one of the core pillars of Greek asylum policy in recent years. However, while it represents a legal turning point, the practical implementation remains uncertain.

On Samos, as in many parts of Greece, the asylum procedure is marked by constant change and administrative inconsistency. Whether due to shifting political winds, legal reinterpretations, or European jurisprudence, asylum seekers face a system where rules change without warning. The lack of clarity and consistency deprives them of legal predictability and increases psychological distress—especially for those already fleeing war, persecution, or systemic instability.

Since the ruling, interviews for the nationalities concerned have been suspended or postponed, plunging many applicants into further uncertainty. And this uncertainty is only growing: despite the positive court decision, the newly appointed Minister of Migration, Mavroudis (Makis) Vouridis—a figure from the far right—recently reaffirmed the government's hardline stance, declaring: "The strengthening of returns and the legal shielding of the deterrence policy are at the heart of our strategy."

With around 1,550 new arrivals recorded at the Samos CCAC since the beginning of the year, the need for transparent, fair, and stable procedures has never been greater.

Amidst this legal and procedural haze, our interpreters remain a critical bridge between people and protection. They are not just translators—they are trusted intermediaries, cultural navigators, and emotional anchors. From legal clinics to interview preparation, their work allows applicants to share their stories in their own words, and helps ensure their rights are understood and respected.

3 MONTHS IN FIGURES



Field Team

7

sessions to provide legal information were organised

50

Asylum seekers attended legal workshops

37

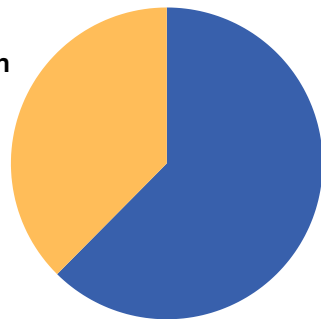
volunteers from non-legal organisation participated to our online workshop

During this period, the project worked with:

1 project manager
1 legal coordinator
3 caseworkers
2 greek lawyers
7 interpreters

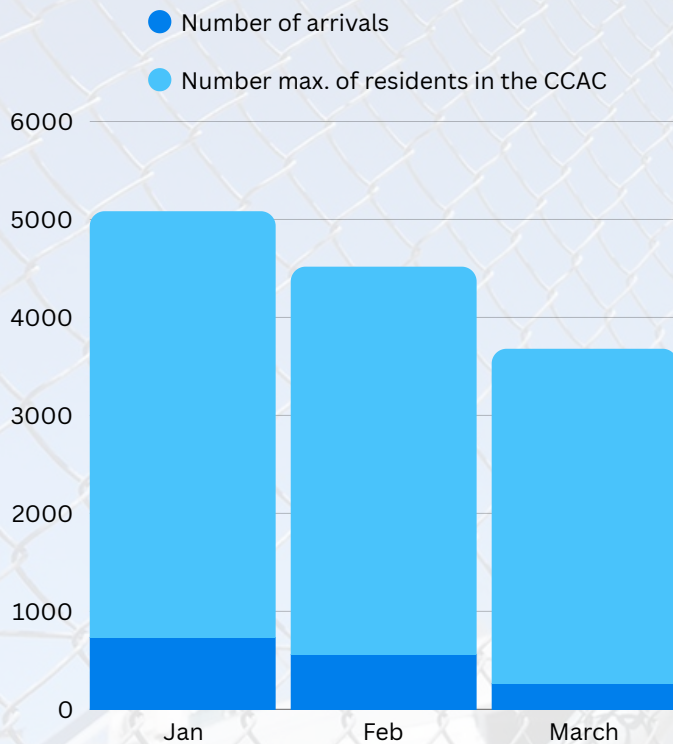
People directly supported :

Women
37.6%



Men
62.4%

10% of the people we met have declared having survived from SGBV, human trafficking or inhuman treatment.



*Data from the Greek Ministry of Migration

individual preparations for asylum interviews

130

requests sent to the authorities

47

Interview accompagnements

10



An average of 53 messages a day to answer to.
Messages received in around ten different languages.

NAVIGATING THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE IN SAMOS: A JOURNEY OF OBSTACLES

For asylum seekers in Greece, especially on Samos, the asylum procedure is often fraught with uncertainty and confusion. In addition to living in conditions that are in complete contradiction to European reception standards, the limited or even non-existent access to information about the asylum procedure further increases the sense of disorientation. The situation is further complicated by frequent, sometimes unpredictable changes in internal procedures. These developments are difficult to follow, particularly because of changes in migration policies, recent case law and adjustments to national and European legislation.

Let's take a few concrete examples to illustrate this complexity:

Sudanese nationals: Since October 2023 and a general change in the asylum service guidelines, Sudanese nationals are theoretically not invited to asylum interviews. The assessment of their claim was based solely on the registration interviews, the assessment of their nationality and the evidence provided in their file. However, since February 2025, we have noticed that some Sudanese are being invited to asylum interviews, a difference in treatment which, according to the Asylum Service, is based on their ethnicity and their alleged not belonging to certain minorities, such as those in Darfur. This difference in treatment exposes some applicants to lengthy procedures and their right to challenge an unfavourable decision is compromised by a lack of transparency.

Indeed, Sudan is currently facing one of the most devastating humanitarian crises due to armed conflict directly affecting civilians since April 2023.



I will soon complete 6 months and nothing has been presented to us so far because of your tribe, and nothing is being studied regarding the decision of the Sudanese. I am a law student. I know very, very well that this is unfair.

In March 2025, Greece's Council of State annulled the designation of Turkey as a "safe third country" for asylum seekers from **Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Somalia**.

The Asylum Service suspended the procedure for the nationalities concerned, who have to undergo an admissibility interview. Since March 2025, these interviews are getting postponed, leaving asylum seekers in complete uncertainty about the future of their application, especially for those fleeing conflict, persecution, or instability. Indeed Syrians were already in a situation of great uncertainty since the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime and the suspension of decisions against them. The difficulty in obtaining clear information about their future situation only exacerbates their stress and their feeling of powerlessness.

This ruling may push the EU to rethink burden-sharing and asylum reform, especially under the new Pact on Migration and Asylum.

WHAT WE HAVE ADVOCATED FOR

9 MONTHS OF CASH ASSISTANCE INTERRUPTION

Together with other humanitarian organisations, we are calling for the immediate resumption of payments, backdated compensation, and systemic reforms to ensure asylum seekers receive adequate support.

The suspension of cash assistance since October 2024 has severely impacted their access to essentials like food, hygiene products, and healthcare. People in asylum procedure, particularly those in remote and isolated camps, are forced to work illegally or rely on family support to survive. The Greek government has not provided an explanation for the stoppage, despite statements issued by civil society groups in September 2024.

WE CALL FOR THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION TO TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT EU FUNDS DISBURSED FOR THE PURPOSE OF CASH ASSISTANCE ARE PROPERLY MANAGED BY GREECE SUCH THAT IT MEETS ITS LEGAL OBLIGATIONS.

UNACCOMPANIED MINORS IN DISTRESS!

CPT

European Committee for the
Prevention of Torture

In January, we supported Human Rights Legal Project (HRLP) in taking legal actions to alert on the disastrous situation in the safe area, where unaccompanied minors reside.

The Safe Area in Samos CCAC has been a place of severe human rights violations, where more than three hundreds of unaccompanied minors have been unlawfully detained in overcrowded, inhumane conditions. They suffer from extreme neglect, lack of medical care, malnutrition, and police violence, with no access to legal aid or psychological support. Despite legal rulings for their release, Greek authorities have failed to act. An urgent visit from the Committee for the Prevention of Torture is needed to document these abuses, prevent further harm, and push for immediate intervention to protect their rights.

WORKING WITH INTERPRETERS

Interpreters are not just facilitators—they are vital members of our team. They help create a supportive environment by ensuring that all parties can communicate effectively. Through their work, interpreters foster trust between the legal team and asylum seekers, essential for building a positive working relationship.

Their work extends beyond translation—it requires cultural sensitivity, adaptability, and the ability to handle sensitive situations with care.

Interpreters are vital for two key aspects of our work:

- **Interview Preparation:**

Interpreters ensure that questions are understood, and answers are communicated clearly. They help us ensure a comforting environment for the applicant to share their personal experiences in their own words.

- **Legal clinics and group sessions :**

During our legal information sessions, interpreters ensure that participants understand the procedure, can ask questions, and are fully engaged in the discussions.



***Between January and March, we collaborated with 7 different interpreters in arabic, farsi and dari**

INTERPRETERS' VOICES

My experience as an interpreter has been fulfilling and of course sometimes there were some challenges in translating sensitive information that I tried to maintain neutrality while being empathetic and respectful and ensuring that the message was conveyed accurately...

Since I've studied law and have work experience with organizations providing legal services so understanding legal terms has not been very complex for me and in some cases, simplifying for the audience was also necessary that I adapted my language to suit the audience, ensuring clarity without compromising the precision of the original message which I've done during interviews...

This experience enhanced my language skills and sense of responsibility as I found out even a small mistake in translation can have significant consequences.

Faheem, farsi interpreter

Interpreting not an easy process and requires great attention. Interpreters require to have a great understanding of language but also to work on the linguistic and cultural aspects during appointments.

The biggest challenge that I faced, was figuring out suitable words in the target language. Every language is different and finding the equivalent words in other languages that describe the same thing is difficult. Also, the word selected must be enough to provide clarity on various aspects. As someone from an Arab culture, I have always tried to appreciate the local culture before embarking on translation. My knowledge of the local Arab culture has enabled me to ensure the accuracy and efficiency of the translation.

This experience taught me effective time management and the value of collaboration. It also taught me the importance of thorough research and reinforced my understanding of the importance of context and continuous professional development.

Mohammed Noor, arabic interpreter

I find this job interesting, especially because it involves helping people. It definitely affects me, mostly in a positive way, I think. For example, it helps me improve my language skills, which I consider beneficial and very important. However, since this job involves interacting with people of all kinds, it can sometimes be challenging—just like any job that requires dealing with people. That said, for me, this might be an added value.

Imad, Arabic interpreter