



© UNHCR / Achilles Zavras

GREECE UPDATE

MORIA FIRE EMERGENCY

2 November 2020

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is supporting the government-led response after a series of fires destroyed the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria (Lesvos) on 8-10 September.

UNHCR has scaled up its support for all asylum-seekers affected and urges for comprehensive and humane solutions to address overcrowding on Greek islands.

BACKGROUND

The September fires that ravaged the Moria Reception and Identification Centre left 12,000 people homeless overnight. The Greek authorities swiftly set up an emergency site to temporarily shelter affected asylum-seekers and refugees.

In addition to calling for sustainable interventions to guarantee dignified living conditions in the Mavrovouni emergency site, UNHCR continues to advocate for comprehensive solutions, continuous European support and responsibility-sharing.

authorities currently allow up to 750 people to be outside the site simultaneously, through a token system.

In Samos, a fire broke out in the Vathy RIC in the early morning hours of 2 November. According to the authorities, there are no injuries, but some 15 tents were burned and between 100 and 150 persons were evacuated. Health organizations were on the spot to offer medical services, thermal blankets and water.

This week, 48 recognized refugees and 18 unaccompanied children were relocated from Greece to Germany. Relocation offers a much-needed safe and orderly means of guaranteeing the protection of those most at-risk. So far, 1,428 recognized refugees and asylum-seekers have been relocated to other European countries. UNHCR is supporting the relocation process with identification, assessment and practical arrangements in coordination with the Greek Asylum Service, EASO, IOM and UNICEF.



12,000

asylum-seekers were left homeless overnight

some **7,700**

asylum-seekers are hosted in the new emergency site

LATEST IN BRIEF

Efforts to upgrade the site continued this week, led by Greek authorities. The German Red Cross Society set up an additional 195 tents for accommodation and the first shower units were installed.

As part of further measures to prevent COVID-19 spread countrywide, the

UNHCR'S RESPONSE

Site planning and shelter

To ensure dignified living conditions for those hosted in the Mavrovouni emergency site, Greek authorities are pursuing extensive ground works such as levelling and the installation of proper sewage and drainage systems. UNHCR and the Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency have deployed technical professionals to provide expert advice to the authorities on physical site planning.

Additional improvements will be crucial to prepare the site for winter. As an interim measure, UNHCR continued preparing individual shelter for the cold and rain, including by equipping 605 UNHCR tents with insulation and 646 tents with wood flooring, as of 30 October.

Partitioning of the aid distribution Rubb Hall was completed, to improve efficiency in the delivery of material and cash assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

Government-led efforts to address WASH capacity advanced this week. Groundwork was completed for the installation of 46 bucket showers provided by IOM.* An additional 152 IOM bucket showers will be available soon and are expected to be installed in the coming weeks. This is a temporary solution as the site is not connected to a water supply system. In the longer-term, more WASH facilities suitable for the winter season will be needed to cover the hygiene needs of the entire camp population.

To protect privacy, the authorities, with the support of NGOs and volunteers from the refugee community, are planning to introduce special provisions for women and teenage girls, including reserved access to shower cabins during specific hours.

COVID-19 prevention and response

The authorities are establishing a centralized medical hub in the site to include areas for health care services as well as COVID-19 screening and isolation. UNHCR worked alongside national health agency EODY, WHO and other medical actors to create the layout. UNHCR also provided one Rubb Hall which was partitioned into seven examination rooms to help ensure patient privacy and confidentiality. In addition, 22 new tents donated by the Austrian Government were set up to serve the COVID-19 isolation area.

To prevent and mitigate the spread of the pandemic, asylum-seekers have undergone rapid COVID-19 testing by national health authorities before entering the emergency site. Based on health protocols, all persons testing positive have been directed to the isolation area. According to the authorities, as of 27 October, 49 people were in quarantine in the site, of whom 42 have tested positive for COVID-19.

Protection of children and vulnerable people

The authorities re-established the Info Point, which provides administrative services to asylum-seekers and refugees, such as the issuance of the first phase of documentation required to access social security and employment. In parallel, the emergency site's protection desk continued to provide residents with information about available protection services, referrals and procedures.

Lack of lighting in some areas in the site presents a risk of gender-based violence. In addition to providing solar-powered lamps that help reduce such risks, UNHCR and expert partners PRAKSIS and Diotima continue to support site management in identifying at-risk women and children and transferring them to safe, informal shelters. As of 29 October, 203 at-risk women and children are temporarily hosted in UNICEF and UNHCR informal shelters.



900

tents (700 provided by UNHCR) were set up

646

tents have wood flooring



Gaps remain in water, sanitation, hygiene and health services



As of 27 October,

49 people remained in quarantine in the emergency site, 42 of whom have tested positive for COVID-19



As of 29 October, UNHCR had distributed over

35,000

core relief items, including blankets, mats, jerrycans and sleeping bags

* Corrigendum: a previous version of the document erroneously stated that the Hellenic Army laid the groundwork, while that work was carried out by an NGO.

UNHCR will continue its response and welcomes much-needed support through flexible funding that would allow it to address the needs of all asylum-seekers impacted by the fires in Moria. Please visit [UNHCR's donation page](#) to learn more about how you can support those most affected.

UNHCR's operation in Greece is grateful to donors who have provided generous and timely support to the Moria fires emergency in addition to regular programmes.

Donors who contributed to support UNHCR activities in Greece in 2020

United States of America | European Union | Education Cannot Wait | Europe Economic Area | Austria | Czechia | Iceland | Norway | Private donors Austria | Private donors Germany | Private donors Italy | Private donors Liechtenstein | Private donors Spain | Private donors Sweden | Private donors United Kingdom | Private donors Switzerland | Switzerland

Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's 2020 programme

Sweden | Private donors Spain | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | United Kingdom | Private donors Republic of Korea | Germany | Private Donors Japan | Switzerland | France | Private Donors Italy | Italy

SITUATION IN GREECE

There are approximately 121,100 asylum-seekers and migrants in Greece, including 4,200 children who arrived alone in the country or were separated from their families along the journey. While the situation on mainland Greece is better overall, overcrowding remains prevalent on the Greek Aegean Islands where, by the end of September, around 21,400 people were crammed into spaces with an estimated combined capacity of 6,200. Most asylum-seekers there must cope with dire living conditions and are exposed to various security risks including sexual and gender-based violence.

UNHCR has long [warned](#) of the urgent need to address the situation and conditions for asylum-seekers on the Aegean Islands. More support is also needed from European countries and European Union institutions in providing immediate protection to those most at-risk through continued resources, ensuring capacity in the country and responsibility-sharing through expedited relocations of unaccompanied children and other vulnerable people.

UNHCR will continue to assist Greek authorities in responding to both short-term and long-term challenges.

For more information on the refugee situation and UNHCR interventions in Greece, you may refer to the [Operational Portal](#).

Contacts:

In Geneva:

Nicolas Brass

Senior External Engagement Coordinator
UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe

Email: brass@unhcr.org

In Greece:

Elena Marda

Government Liaison Associate
UNHCR Country Office in Greece

Email: marda@unhcr.org