



GREECE UPDATE #10

LESVOS

20 November 2020



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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.



12,000
asylum-seekers were left homeless overnight

some **7,300**
asylum-seekers are hosted in the new emergency site

BACKGROUND

Two months after fires swept through the Moria Reception and Identification Centre, nearly 7,300 asylum-seekers and refugees are sheltered in the Mavrovouni site, which was swiftly set up to host those affected. The fires had left some 12,000 people homeless, of which many were transferred to other accommodations.

The Greek authorities led the response with the support of UN agencies, including UNHCR, as well as international and national NGOs and volunteer groups.

In addition to the planned technical interventions to improve living conditions in Mavrovouni, UNHCR continues to call for comprehensive solutions and European support and responsibility-sharing.

LATEST IN BRIEF

Greece entered a country-wide lockdown on 7 November with movement allowed by

self-attestation for essential reasons only. In compliance with the measures, asylum-seekers and refugees are also allowed to move in and out of the Mavrovouni site for essential reasons only, by self-attestation. UNHCR worked with authorities to ensure that site residents are duly informed through text message, direct messages via loudspeakers, as well as through refugee outreach volunteers that communicate the requirements of the new measures directly to their communities. UNHCR also liaised with food distribution actors to disseminate written messages along with the food packages.

Organized transfers from Lesvos to the mainland continue, freeing up much needed space in the site. Since the fires, at least 2,900 people have been moved out of the island, as of 18 November. Of those, 479 moved into ESTIA apartments with UNHCR support.

UNHCR'S RESPONSE

Site planning and shelter

Shelter partners, under the coordination of the Greek authorities, have initiated preparatory work ahead of planned drainage, electricity provision and water supply projects. These will require large-scale adjustments, such as the removal and reinstallation of tents, to be completed gradually. In addition to targeted technical interventions, UNHCR provides technical advice and supports in coordination.

UNHCR completed groundwork for the installation of 14 containers in the Mavrovouni site that remained intact after the fires in Moria. As of 18 November, nine containers have been installed to be used as offices in the designated administration area.

Water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH)

While WASH capacity has been improved, further upgrades are required and planned to address the needs of the population. In particular, WASH actors are exploring ways to supply showers, of which more are needed, with hot water and lighting to increase security. As of 18 November, 422 toilets were operational, one for every 17 persons.

NGOs have also set up four hand sanitization spots in different parts of the site to enhance good hygiene practices and mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 prevention and response

Works continued for the creation of an on-site medical hub to bring medical providers and services under one roof, including those related to COVID-19 prevention and response. UNHCR completed preparatory works and placed an additional three containers (five in total) that are used for health activities. UNHCR also reinforced

the 22 tents donated by Austria with insulation and wood flooring, to serve as temporary COVID-19 isolation shelters.

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. As of 17 November, 14 people remain in quarantine, of which 9 have tested positive for COVID-19 and are isolated alongside family members.

UNHCR also began technical works to enhance the quarantine area for new arrivals. Groundwork, such as levelling, is ongoing and will be followed by installation of temporary shelter, hygiene facilities, shading structures and solar-powered streetlights. Works will also be undertaken to enhance the area's water, sewage and power capacity. As of 18 November, UNHCR had installed two containers to be used for security and reception.

Protection of children and vulnerable people

This fortnight, UNHCR and other protection actors focused on gender-based violence prevention and response by setting up a new referral pathway system to link site resident survivors with available case management services according to established eligibility criteria. This helps avoid duplication of efforts among actors and ensure survivors obtain specialized assistance.

The current lack of a dedicated workspace makes it difficult for legal aid actors to hold individual sessions with asylum-seekers and may compromise confidentiality. UNHCR and legal aid actors are reviewing practical solutions with the authorities.



900
tents (700 provided by UNHCR) were set up

The **700** UNHCR tents have insulation and wood flooring



Gaps remain in water, sanitation, hygiene and health services



As of 17 November, **14** people remained in quarantine in the emergency site, of whom 9 have tested positive for COVID-19

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

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SITUATION IN GREECE

There are approximately 119,500 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, most of the roughly 19,500 asylum-seekers at the reception and identification centres on the Greek Aegean Islands as of the end of October must cope with difficult 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 UNHCR's [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