

Urgent Call to Action from Civil Society Organisations across Europe

MORIA FIRES: European Governments must urgently relocate displaced individuals from Greece

Over the past days devastating firesⁱ burnt down the Moria Registration and Identification Center and surrounding areas, the EU Hotspot on the Greek island Lesbos. The fires have left thousands of vulnerable individuals homeless and traumatised,ⁱⁱ among them over 4,000 children.ⁱⁱⁱ

The undersigned organisations reiterate their call on the governments of EU Member States, with support from the European Commission,^{iv} to urgently relocate displaced individuals from Greece.

While we are shocked and saddened at these developments, they come as no surprise. Lesbos and the other EU Hotspots^v on the Aegean islands have reached breaking point long ago.^{vi} Moria camp is currently hosting roughly 12-13,000 displaced individuals, with an official capacity of only 2,800. These severely overcrowded camps are characterised by squalid living conditions and a severe lack of adequate sanitation or hygiene facilities, even amid the heightened health risks due to Covid-19.^{vii} The situation in the other Greek Hotspots is similarly untenable and repeated warnings^{viii} have remained unanswered for over four years.

Relocation urgently needed

We welcome the transfer of 406 unaccompanied children from Lesbos to the Greek mainland, with financial support from the European Commission.^{ix} This demonstrates how swiftly transfers can be co-ordinated when the political will exists. We commend the Norwegian and Dutch governments' commitments to relocating 50^x and 100^{xi} individuals respectively, as well as the French and German governments' willingness to transfer 400 children.^{xii} We urge further European governments to follow with concrete commitments and action without delay. The positive example set by relocations carried out by the coalition of willing Member States since March 2020^{xiii} shows that relocations can be carried out safely and successfully for everyone involved. Member States, EU institutions, relevant EU and UN agencies with support from civil society should now share experiences, expertise and resources to ensure further states join the coalition. The undersigned organisations stand ready to support these efforts, to bring the men, women and children stranded in Greece to safety, and thereby uphold our European values of human rights and human dignity.

The EU Hotspots as an EU Migration Management Approach

The latest events prove once again the failure of the Hotspots as the default EU migration management approach. We call on the European Parliament to investigate the role that the EU and Member States played in the failed management of Moria. Moreover, we urge the European Commission, the German EU Council Presidency and Member States to treat the horrifying images of Moria burning as unequivocal proof of the tragic human cost^{xiv} of an EU asylum and migration system based on containment and deterrence policies. We strongly recommend the European Commission to take these events into account with a view to the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, and ensure the same policies do not inform the extremely concerning proposals for 'processing centres' at EU borders. It is vital that the New Pact is taken as an opportunity to present a new start rather than a replication of past errors.

Signed by:

Action Aid Hellas (Faces of Migration partner)
Ambrela Slovakia (Faces of Migration partner)
ASGI
BPID Bulgaria (Faces of Migration partner)
Caritas Europa
Caritas Hellas
Caritas Slovakia
Češi Pomáhají (Czech Republic)
Child Circle
Consortium of Migrants Assisting NGOs (Czech Republic)
COSPE Onlus
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Defence for Children International
Defence for Children International – Belgium
Defence for Children International - Greece
Defence for Children International – Italia
Destination Unknown
Diaconia ECCB (Faces of Migration partner)
Diakonie Austria
Dutch Council for Refugees
Dynamo International – Street Workers Network
Echo100Plus
Eurochild
Eurodiaconia
Europe Must Act
European Lawyers in Lesvos
European Network on Statelessness
Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid
FOCSIV - Italian Federation of Christian NGOs Italy (Faces of Migration partner)
GCAP Belgium (Faces of Migration partner)
Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) Europe
Greek Council for Refugees (GCR)
Help Refugees
Human Rights League Slovakia
ICMC Europe
Immigrant Council of Ireland
International Child Development Initiatives (NL)
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
INTERSOS
Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)
Kopin
Lighthouse Relief (LHR)
LUMOS Foundation
Mareena Country Slovakia
Médecins du Monde Belgique
Médecins du Monde – France
Minority Rights Group International
Missing Children Europe
Mokosha NGO Centre
Movimento per l'Autosviluppo, l'Interscambio e la Solidarietà (MAIS) (Italy)
Nadácia Milana Šimečku (Slovakia)

Network for Children's Rights
One Happy Family Lesvos
ONGD Plataforma Portuguesa
Organization Mondiale pour l'Éducation Préscolaire/ World Organization for Early Childhood Education
Oxfam
PAX
Pax Christi Vlaanderen
PICUM
Plate-Forme Mineurs en Exil - Platform Kinderen op de Vlucht
Povod Slovenia (Faces of Migration partner)
Refugee Legal Support (RLS)
Refugee Youth Service
Slovak Humanitarian Council PRAKIS
Solidarity Now
SOS Villages Greece
Still I Rise
Terre des Hommes Hellas
Terre des Hommes International Federation
Velos Youth
Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen
Women's Refugee Commission

References

- ⁱ [Al Jazeera](#), 9 September 2020
- ⁱⁱ [CNN](#), 9 September 2020
- ⁱⁱⁱ [UNCHR](#) and [Council of Europe](#), 9 September 2020
- ^{iv} Together with relevant EU and UN agencies and in cooperation with civil society organisations.
- ^v [UNHCR](#), 31 August 2018
- ^{vi} [Amnesty International](#), 6 December 2018 ; see also: [Call to Action](#) by Civil society organisations, March 2020
- ^{vii} [MSF](#), 30 July 2020
- ^{viii} [HRW](#), 19 March 2016
- ^{ix} [Ekathimerini](#), 9 September 2020
- ^x [Dpa-international](#), 9 September 2020
- ^{xi} [NLTimes.NL](#), 11 September 2020
- ^{xii} [France 24](#), 10 Septembre 2020
- ^{xiii} [European Commission](#), 15 April 2020 ; [PubAffairsBruxelles](#), 8 July 2020
- ^{xiv} [MSF](#), 11 March 2020