

# URGENT ACTION

## REFUGEES SHAMEFULLY TRAPPED IN GREECE

**Thousands remain stranded in Greece in dreadful conditions, both in official and makeshift informal camps. The humanitarian crisis will deteriorate unless reception conditions improve and EU Member States urgently accept refugees from Greece.**

The latest official figures raise the number of **refugees, asylum seekers and migrants** stuck in Greece at approximately 50,000, mostly women and children fleeing from conflict and violence. More than 13,000, including families, pregnant women and people with disabilities remain stranded in Idomeni in unbearable conditions. The port of Pireaus, in Athens, has also become a makeshift camp where around 5,000 sleep on the terminal's floor or in small tents outside the terminal. Volunteers and NGOs are struggling to provide basic needs and shelter.

Conditions in many of the camps opened by the authorities in February and March are also extremely poor. In early March, Amnesty International witnessed poor hygiene conditions and families sleeping for weeks on the floor or in small tents at the old-airport in Elliniko, nearby Athens. There are also reports of children becoming ill due to poor conditions, including water getting inside the tents, at the Chersos ex-military camp in Northern Greece.

Camps on the Greek islands have been evacuated and thousands put on ferries and transferred to camps in the mainland since 19 March. Refugees and migrants explained that they were not told where they were being taken, which created chaos and confusion. Following the EU-Turkey deal on 18 March, refugees arriving on Greek shores are registered on the islands and could be returned to Turkey after a fast-track asylum examination procedure. Around 5,500 people remain in the islands, most of which arrived after 20 March. Additionally, under the new provisions, camps on the Greek islands have become detention facilities. As a result, UNHCR has suspended some of its activities at closed centres on the islands in line with its policy opposing mandatory detention.

With reception conditions and asylum procedures overstretched in Greece and the EU relocation programme still not functioning properly, the fate of thousands of refugees in need of urgent protection is at stake. EU Member States agreed the distribution of 66,000 people from Greece but only 569 have been effectively relocated so far. It remains unclear how the EU-Turkey deal will affect refugees already stranded in Greece.

### **Please write immediately in English or your own language:**

- Calling on the President of the European Council and members of the European Council to use all available means to urgently accept asylum-seekers from Greece including relocating a significantly larger number of people without applying restrictive selection criteria, easing family reunification and allowing asylum-seekers to obtain visas from member states' representations in Greece for onward legal travel;
- Urging them to open up more safe and legal routes for people in need of international protection;
- Calling on the Greek authorities to urgently and significantly enhance reception conditions ensuring refugees and asylum seekers have access to beds, food, clean water, sanitation, medical treatment and personal safety and that adequate information on asylum procedures, EU relocation and family reunification programmes, is provided.

### **PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 4 MAY 2016 TO:**

European Council President  
Donald Tusk  
European Council  
Rue de la Loi 175, 1048, Brussels  
Fax: +32 22 81 69 34  
Email: EC.President-  
Petitions@european-council.europa.eu  
a.eu  
Salutation: Dear Mr Tusk

Members of the European Council  
Please check contact details here  
for faxes:  
<http://europa.eu/whoiswho/public/index.cfm?fuseaction=idea.hierarcy&nodeID=264075&lang=en>

Alternate Minister of Migration Policy  
Ioanis Mouzalas  
2 Dragatsaniou & 27 Stadiou  
Athens 105 63, Greece  
Fax: +30 213 136 4418  
Email:  
gram.anaplypourgou@ypes.gr  
Salutation: Dear Minister

Alternate Minister of National Defence  
Dimitris Vitsas  
227-231 Mesogeion st. Hologoros  
15451, Greece  
Fax: + 30 210 659 5164  
Mail: anyetha@mod.mil.gr  
Salutation: Dear Minister

**Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country.** HIS EXCELLENCY MR KONSTANTINOS BIKAS, Embassy of Greece, 1A Holland Park W11 3TP, 020 7229 3850, Fax 020 7229 7221, gremb.lon@mfa.gr.

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date. This is the first update of UA 48/16. Further information:

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR25/3574/2016/en/>

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INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since the signature of the EU-Turkey deal on 18 March, more than 2,700 refugees and migrants arrived on Greece's shores between 19 and 21 March in flimsy and unworthy boats. Two kids drowned as result of the dangerous journey, proving once again that safe and legal routes are urgently needed.

The EU-Turkey deal will allow all refugees and migrants arriving in Greece to be deported to Turkey. This means the agreement will allow the deportation of refugees fleeing from violence and conflict from war-torn countries to Turkey.

There is more than 30 temporary camps in Greece, predominantly in the mainland, including the informal camps in Idomeni and Pireaus. Most of them have been set up in the past few weeks to respond to the humanitarian crisis affecting thousands of refugees stranded in Greece following the closure of the border in the north by authorities of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Macedonia). However reception capacity is still insufficient to cope with high numbers of refugees trapped in the country and concerns remain high over the conditions of the camps.

Volunteers, activists, ordinary citizens and NGOs continue to offer the bulk of humanitarian support to refugees transferred to the official refugee camps or staying at the informal camps in Pireaus and Idomeni.

Name: Thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants trapped in Greece.

Gender m/f: all

Further information on UA: 48/16 Index: EUR 25/3692/2016 Issue Date: 23 March 2016