



SAMOS LEGAL CENTRE NEWSLETTER

Welcome to the 33rd edition of the Samos Legal Centre newsletter!

The year 2024 was marked by a record number of asylum seekers arriving in Samos, intensifying an already deep humanitarian crisis. The camp, with inhumane conditions completely ill-suited to the massive influx of people, saw a deterioration in the living conditions of asylum seekers, exacerbating suffering and urgent needs.

In response to this situation, the Samos Legal Centre team continued to adapt to the changing practices of the asylum service, as well as the challenges that have had a lasting impact on the asylum process, such as the absence of interpretation services for several months or the lack of organized transfers to the mainland, sometimes leaving vulnerable profiles stranded on the island of Samos for longer than was reasonable.

Recent events, especially related to Syria, have further highlighted the need to stay vigilant about the evolution of practices and case processing.

In 2025, we remain committed to supporting as many people as possible while amplifying our voice to demand just, humane, and appropriate responses to this unprecedented situation.

We extend our sincere wishes to our partners and all the courageous individuals we have the privilege of supporting.

**TOGETHER, LET US CONTINUE TO FIGHT FOR DIGNITY, RIGHTS, AND A
BETTER FUTURE FOR ALL !**

CONTEXT UPDATE

FALL OF BASHAR AL ASSAD REGIME IN SYRIA What does it mean for syrian applicants in Samos?

A change of the political situation in Syria and a whole procedure overwhelmed for Syrian applicants in Greece

Since the 10th of December 2024, a large number of European countries, including Greece, have taken the rapid decision to suspend the processing of asylum applications for Syrians, after the downfall of former dictator Bashar al-Assad.

Following this [decision](#), all Syrian's applications have been put on hold and no decisions are no longer being issued.

Knowing that the Syrians in Greece have to go through a specific admissibility interview before being interviewed on their country of origin, this decision creates more stress again in their procedure

The uncertainty of the next weeks potentially leaves nearly 2000 of Syrians in limbo only for [Samos](#)*

According to recent guidelines we have received from the Samos camp authorities, applicants who pass the admissibility interview will be called a second time for an eligibility interview, where they will be examined on their risk of persecution in Syria.

However, new Syrian applicants from now on are getting interviewed at the same time both on admissibility and eligibility. It is then a much longer interview they have to go through and have to demonstrate that both Turkey and Syria are not safe place for them to go back to.

Putting their asylum file on hold is leaving them in a state of uncertainty while they endure precarious and undignified living conditions with very limited access to basic needs, will certainly severely affect their physical and mental well-being.

**UNHCR Dashboards & Factsheets - Situation reports on Samos 16/22 December 2024*



*“This thing made me very tired
Please please I beg you I want to
know what happened with my
decision I beg you I have been in
Greece since 9/1/2023 Today is
12/16/2024 and nothing will change
with my decision. All of my friends
who were with me in Greece took their
decision on time and until this time
they will not tell me what happened
with my asylum decision”*

*words from N*** a syrian applicant on appeal stage*

2024 IN FIGURES



Field Team

29

sessions to provide legal information were organised

288

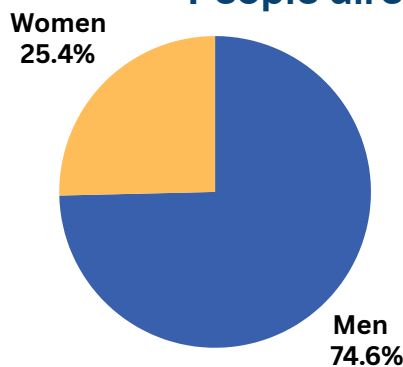
Asylum seekers attended legal workshops

180

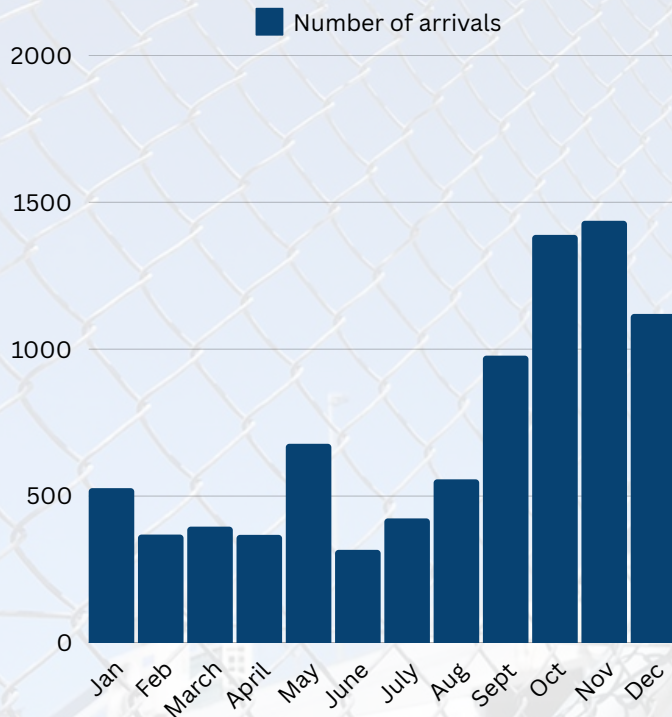
volunteers from non-legal organisation participated to our online workshop

In 2024, the project saw the following people join its team
2 project managers
1 legal coordinator
5 caseworkers
2 greek lawyers
20 interpreters

People directly supported :



15.9% 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

340

requests sent to the authorities

1279

consultations on appeal stage

73



An average of **50 messages a day** to answer to. Messages received in around **ten different languages**.

TEAM UPDATE

This newsletter is an opportunity to thank the team who have worked at the Legal Centre over the last few months, in particular Alexia and Louise, who have worked with great professionalism and passion as caseworkers. We would also like to thank Souleymane, who ensured that our hotline remained operational over the festive period.



At the start of this year we **welcome two new caseworkers, Adele and Mathilde**, who will be joining the team for the next 6 months.

Adele, with a background in International Relations and Human Rights, developed extensive knowledge of human rights protection mechanisms. In particular, she gained hands-on experience in asylum casework in Italy and Croatia, providing legal advice and organizing workshops on asylum seekers rights

Mathilde, provided crucial legal support to asylum seekers in Athens, offering legal information and connecting vulnerable people to relevant services. Additionally, she led an empowerment project for refugee women through sports, creating safe spaces for them to build confidence and overcome societal challenges, highlighting the importance of combining practical support with empowerment.

Their complementary profiles, rich in varied experience, including some with people on the move in Greece, promise to be an asset to the team.

ADVOCACY PROGRESS

At the end of November, together with **7 other NGOs, ASFF raises the alarm about the inhumane and degrading living conditions in the Closed and Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) of Samos.**

In an [open letter](#) addressed to the Greek Ministry of Migration & Asylum and the Greek Ministry of Health, 8 Civil Society NGO active in the areas of asylum and migration on the island of Samos, urgently called on the authorities to take immediate and effective action to address these inhumane conditions and to ensure full compliance with applicable EU and national laws.

Currently, more than 4 000 people reside in the CCAC, which was originally built to accommodate only 2 040 people. In 2023, the Ministry of Migration & Asylum arbitrarily changed the official capacity to 3,650 people without making any structural changes to practically increase accommodation spaces.

As a result, amidst a rapid increase in migrant boat arrivals on the island of Samos, the camp residents are being subject to **inhumane living conditions which pose a grave threat to their health, dignity and personal safety.**

To read the full letter





TESTIMONY

We are happy to share with you the story of M who was recognised refugee after an appeal of his 1st instance decision in December 2024***

M, 41, - Syria***

M**** is 41 and was born in Syria. Fleeing the conflict in Syria he entered in Turkey at the end of 2019 after an unsuccessful attempt to cross the Syrian Turkish border, And even faced illegal refoulement by the Turkish authorities back to Syria and managed to enter in Greece only in March 2024.

He stayed 4 years in Turkey and faced every kind of difficulties. Especially after the devastating earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in February 2023, his situation deteriorated dramatically and his legal status was overturned, preventing him from renewing his turkish residency documents.

His life and physical integrity have also been threatened in Turkey because of his origin. he was violently attacked several times and one of them caused him permanent injuries that require medical and pharmaceutical treatment to this day.

He now suffers from a serious illness, a cerebral haemorrhage and possibly epilepsy for which he is receiving medication and made him be identified as vulnerable by the Samos health department.

But the Greek asylum service didn't consider these elements as sufficient to consider him admissible.

He contacted us in July 2024 as soon as he was notified of his negative decision, to be supported for his appeal procedure. In order to challenge the legal and substantive validity of this decision, we gather again his testimony, his medical proofs and completed his case with in-depth research on the current situation in Turkey.



His file was a very revealing example of the importance of the asylum Interview, and above all, the need for the interviewer to conduct a holistic interview and consider every risks the applicant may run from the information he gives.

For example, we noted from his transcript that the interviewer did not ask any questions regarding the discrimination the applicant suffered as a Kurd in Turkey, even though it is known that Kurds face racist treatment and persecution in Turkey and that the applicant explain having been attacked by a group of Turkish people.

“I was outside the city of Samos. I was in Athens, when the second positive decision was issued. Your organization told me that I received a positive reply, and I had a very big joy and it was my only hope in life to take this positive decision [...] I send all the thanks and appreciation for the support you give to refugees in general you do not have any discrimination between refugees. It's your organization legal and psychological support that helped me”