

Joint Statement on the Extension of Restrictive Measures for Asylum-Seekers

To the Minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarachis

To the Alternative Minister of Migration and Asylum Policy, Giorgos Koumoutsakos

To the Minister of Civil Protection, Michalis Chrisochoidis

The undersigned organisations are seeking clarification from the Hellenic Ministries of Health, Civil Protection and Migration and Asylum's extension of restrictive measures placed on all island Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and a number of mainland camps, until 21st June 2020.

As Greece navigates its way out of lockdown, it must not turn its back on its humanitarian principles. From 4th May, restrictions have gradually been lifted across much of Greek society, including shops, cafes, schools and beaches. On 15th June, Greece opened its borders again to foreign tourists. Meanwhile, restrictions placed on the 30,695 people living in the hotspots and a number of camps on the mainland have been extended without adequate justification.

We are extremely concerned that the absence of any sufficient evidence to justify stronger restrictions in the camps than elsewhere in the country is tantamount to violating European law regarding detention, particularly the EU Directive on International Protection ([2013/33 art. 8](#)). Rather than protecting camp communities, this continued lockdown is having untold physical and psychological consequences for camp residents as they continue to suffer overcrowded living conditions, scarce hygiene facilities, insufficient medical access and a total lack of personal protective equipment. The restrictive measures have severely increased tensions and incidents of violence, counter to Article 17 of the same aforementioned Directive. Even with financial support from the European Commission, little has been done to improve these appalling conditions, which would be the only logical measure to better protect residents from COVID-19.

We are extremely concerned to see how on the islands these restrictive measures are being imposed. Hellenic Police forces are routinely clearing the streets of all asylum-seekers each evening at 19:00, including those living in independent accommodation and therefore precluded from the extension. The way these measures are being arbitrarily applied appears indicative of widespread racial profiling.

Finally, we must recognise the detrimental impact these restrictive measures have on the ability of asylum seekers to access support services to which they have a right during the asylum process. In recent weeks, the asylum services have issued thousands of decisions, including many rejections. Due to these restrictive measures, many asylum seekers are unable to access lawyers to file appeals, jeopardising their right to this crucial process.

Therefore, we ask you to provide immediate clarification on the following:

- What is the public health justification for the easing of restrictions for general Greek society - including for tourists arriving from other European and other countries - whilst maintaining tight restrictions for asylum-seekers living in the RICs?
- Will the government set out a clear timeline for the easing of restrictions in the RICs that will allow asylum seekers the same rights as the general public to access basic retail and support services?
- Will the government outline its response to racial profiling, and, in light of contemporary, global attention around the abuse of power by institutions on marginalised communities, make a commitment to ensuring racially just and dignified treatment of all those living in Greece?
- Will the government commit to finding alternative and effective measures for protecting asylum seekers and refugees living in the island RICs from the COVID-19 threat, that does not amount to de facto detention within overcrowded camps?

We remain at your disposal for more information.

Signed by,

Action for Education	Northern Lights Aid
Aegean Boat Report	One Family - No Borders
Borderline Lesbos	One Happy Family
Bridge2	Open Cultural Center
Choosehumanity	Project Armonia
Droit de Rester Fribourg	ReFOCUS Media Labs
ECHO100PLUS	Refugee Biriyani & Bananas
Europe Must Act	Refugee Rescue
Glocal Roots	Refugee Rights Europe
Grenzenlose Wärme - Refugee Relief Work e.V.	RTI
Help Refugees / Choose Love	Samos Volunteers
Herts for Refugees	Second Tree
Hope and Aid Direct	ShowerPower Foundation
I AM YOU	Still I Rise
Indigo Volunteers	The Lava Project
Intereuropean Human Aid Association	The School Bus Project
Legal Centre Lesbos	Three Peas help make a difference
Lesvos Solidarity	Verein FAIR.
Medical Volunteers International e.V.	Wave - Thessaloniki
Mobile Info Team	Yoga and Sport For Refugees
NO NAME KITCHEN	