

# **THE GREEK REFUGE:**

**WHERE REFUGEES DREAMS GO TO DIE**

**Website: <https://thegreekrefuge.wordpress.com/>**

**BY PAULA CAMARA & APRIL MCLENNAN**

**Paula Cámara and April McLennan (08/06/2018)**

While developing the project we have been working on a website that is called <https://thegreekrefuge.wordpress.com/> where we have uploaded our articles, videos, podcasts, a glossary with keywords, background posts with infographics, photo galleries and a part called “our journey” where we explained our work day to day, as well as our experiences that we lived but didn’t add to the articles, but they helped us to get a view of the situation of the refugees in Greece and we wanted to add them to share the knowledge that we gained.

- 1. Prostitution: the Scape Route for Refugee Unaccompanied Minors**
  - **Text: 4,987 characters**
  - **Infographic: 123 characters**
  - **Podcast: 158 seconds**
  - **Video: 150 seconds**
  - **Photo gallery**
- 2. The forgotten refugees**
  - **Text: 5,474 characters**
  - **Video: 100 seconds**
- 3. Squats, the new home for hundreds of refugees in Athens**
  - **Text: 3,688 characters**
  - **Infographic: 99 characters**
  - **Podcast: 136 seconds**
  - **Photo gallery**
- 4. Lesbos Island: Where the Dirty Talk is Rubbish**
  - **Text: 10,703 characters**

- **Video: 376 seconds**
- 5. **Single refugee men also a vulnerable group in Greece**
  - **Text: 4,184 characters**
  - **Infographic: 132 characters**
  - **Photo Galleries**
- 6. **Movement For Mental Health**
  - **Text: 9,352 characters**
  - **Infographic: 333 characters**
  - **Video: 203 seconds**
- 7. **New Greek refugee law speeds up asylum procedure and increases deportations**
  - **Text: 2,968 characters**
  - **Photo gallery**
- 8. **EU's sets the path for Refugees in Greece**
  - **Text: 2,613**

**Total: 45, 918 characters**

# Index

Final Project .....	3
Movements for Mental Health .....	3
The Forgotten Refugees .....	10
Lesvos Island: Where the Dirty Talk is Rubbish .....	15
Single refugee men also a vulnerable group in Greece .....	22
Squats, the new home for hundreds of Refugees in Athens .....	28
EU ' s law sets the path for refugees in Greece .....	33
Prostitution: the Scape Route for Refugee Unaccompanied Minors.....	36
Reflection Report .....	41
Literature List .....	49
Source List .....	50
Video Transcripts .....	65

# Movement for Mental Health

By April McLennan



**Mental health is deteriorating in Greece’s refugee camps due to overcrowding and poor living conditions. One organisation has decided to take a swing at helping relieve the situation through physical activities.**

With a rope hanging around the neck of the 19-year-old boy, his past traumas flashed before his eyes. The death of his mother in his homeland, the brutal torture and death of his father on the journey to Greece, the death of his sister as the ocean swept her away, along with their boat.

This is Moses, his real name will not be used to protect his identity. He is one of Giovanna Bonvini patients at Médecins Sans Frontières on the Greek Island of Lesbos in Greece. He was found trying to commit suicide and was brought to the hospital where he was then referred to the Médecins Sans Frontières health clinic.

Bonvini says, “Moses was a red case in terms of triage. We immediately took in the case and started with our model of care, involving doctors, psychiatrist and

psychologists as well. During the first consultation he was unable to speak with us, he was re-experiencing the past events. He had dissociative symptoms. He was agitated and confused.”

Upon arriving to the island five weeks earlier, Moses was unable to sleep or find food. He was completely alone and isolated. These factors, as well as his previous traumas, led him to start hallucinating, hearing the voices of his parents saying, “come with us, come with us.”

Bonvini recalls the boy’s desperate pleas, “I have no reason to live, my family is calling me, I see them and I have to join them... I want to die...please let me die, please!”

Bonvini refused to give up hope and instead provided him with the psychological care needed to help him to heal his physical wounds and mental scars.

Today, Moses has slept one full night and the hallucinations have stopped. He is surviving day by day, but he is thankful that he is alive.

Moses remains in Lesbos as he waits to seek asylum in Greece. This has become a slow process due to many European countries closing their borders, as well as the European Union agreement with Turkey in 2016, this came after 46,000 refugees reached the island in the space of two months. The agreement states that people who enter Greece have to remain at their entry point until they reach asylum status.

According to the deal, those who do not reach asylum status are to be shipped back to Turkey. However, the Greek government do not follow the agreement in this way as they do not consider Turkey as a safe place.

Sociologist of health, Elli Loannidi, at the Nation School of Public Health in Athens explains, “They are stuck there, they cannot move into the mainland’s, only the vulnerable populations. This makes a lot of people pretend that they are vulnerable and that they have mental health issues.”

However, most of the asylum seekers do suffer from mental health issues as they have been exposed to the violence of torture and war. But Loannidi believes that the

poor and uncertain conditions they are currently living in are having the biggest toll on their morale.

“If I lock you up in this room and I say that you stay here for a period of time that you don’t know how long you will stay here, of course you will go crazy. I mean, it is not that these people have mental health issues, it is the situation. They are stuck in islands, which even though they are not prisoners, an island is a prison, you cannot go. When we see them they don’t ask us if we have food. They say, ‘when are we going to leave.’”

In Lesbos, most of the asylum seekers are sent to the main camp known as Moria. It is extremely overcrowded with the original capacity of the area being meant for 2,000 people, it is now overflowing to cram in approximately 5,000 people.

Despite the number of people in the camp, there is a strong feeling of isolation due to these asylum seekers being cut off from the rest of Europe. The conditions within the camp have been compared to a prison.

Giovanna Bonvini, from Médecins Sans Frontières says, “People are being forced to live in unacceptable conditions indefinitely, which is putting their health at risk. The EU-Turkey deal destroys lives, literally. They have to fight for every little thing, clean water, a decent shelter, a shower, food and this is just too much! These terrible conditions are exacerbating peoples’ mental health severely.”

During her consultations with her patients, Bonvini has been told of widespread drug and alcohol abuse within the camps, sexual harassment, as well as people fighting on a daily basis.

One of her patients that lives in the Moria camp came forward and admitted this to the clinic after having self-mutilated.

“I left Syria because my house was bombed, my daughter died and my son got burned with serious injuries. We left with my son alone to Turkey. My son could not continue and he died. I had nothing else to lose in my life, I lost everything. I told myself I have to continue and manage to find a way to go to Greece through the sea. We managed to cross the sea and arrived to Greece from the first try,” he said.

Upon arriving to Greece, the Syrian man discovered that the borders were closed, he was sent to the Moria. The situation in the camp continues to grow worse and he has been given no clear information or answers from the asylum service.

“Everything is delayed, they don’t feel the pain that we live and we face every day.”

After exhausting their mental strength to make the journey across the sea to the safety of Europe, when they find themselves trapped in the inhumane and unacceptable place that is Moria, some of the refugees become so desperate that they try to commit suicide.

**MENTAL HEALTH FACTS**

 **WARS AND DISASTERS**  
have a large impact on mental health and psychosocial well-being

---

**UP TO 34% REFUGEES**  
have experienced a suicidal behaviour



 **HUMAN RIGHTS**  
violations of people with mental and psychosocial disability are routinely reported

---

 **STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION**  
against patients and families prevent people from seeking mental health care

Nation School of Public Health sociologist, Elli Loannidi says, “it is desperation, it is hopelessness, it is a situation that has to change. People have to know how long they will remain in a place, when they will move, if they will move, why they don’t move. And of course, when you accept the vulnerable, it is obvious that everyone will want to do that, will pretend that there is a problem to find a way to escape.”

Despite some asylum seekers attempting to deceive the system in order to escape the inhumane conditions, the mental health problems are very real. [With 1 in 3 Syrian refugees](#) suffering from depression, anxiety and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Furthermore, the rates of depression and anxiety are three times higher among refugees compared to the general population. But according to the [World Health Organisation](#), “once their basic needs for security, support and safety are met, these groups of people have shown inspiring resiliency.”

To help combat the mental health problems of the asylum seekers and attempt to make them feel empowered, healthy and capable of coping with their daily life, the organisation, Sport for Refugees, has started several sporting classes on Lesbos island.

Estelle Jean, Executive Director of Sport for Refugees says, “To have people that are able to move and be motivated, to be able to do something during their day. Because there are a lot of people stuck in the camp in Moria and for them it’s an opportunity to continue, to have a purpose during the day and to have more motivation, also to feel healthy, to feel good. to have an activity that will make them feel good during the day.”

The project offers classes of swimming, yoga, taekwondo, muay Thai, self-defence, gym class and a running club.

This type of physical activity is extremely beneficial to the mental health of the refugees as participating in sporting activities reduces psychological distress up to [47% if active 4 times a week](#).

Estelle decided to share her passion with these people as she felt it would be beneficial to them while they are waiting to obtain their papers so that they can move

to the mainland to work or study. Many of the refugees have now become teachers for the classes.

Sport for Refugees decided to start the yoga classes in order to help the refugees relax and allow them to forget about the stress and trauma that is present within the Moria camp.

This appears to be working as Jean hears reviews such as, “yoga makes me feel relaxed, at the end of the day I feel better. The next day I was feeling more relaxed and I forgot my problems while I was in the yoga class.”

The uncertainty of their futures, along with limited access to proper health care and the looming threat of deportation, acts as added pressure on the mental health of these people.

Through the benefits of the physical activities of Sport for Refugees, and the care from Médecins Sans Frontières, the mental health of some of these people is showing signs of improvement.

Giovanna Bonvini, from Médecins Sans Frontières says, “We cannot change the reality (asylum process or living condition), but we can help people to better understand the situation, to feel “normal” in an abnormal context; we can provide treatment and care, we can accept their sadness, anger, desperation, pain...and just repair wounds (externals and internal), this is the first step to give back them dignity, self-respect, strength... finally resilience.”

The agreement between the European Union and Turkey is putting lives at risk as the Island of Lesbos reaches capacity and camps becomes uninhabitable. Refugees that have exhausted all of their mental strength on the journey across the sea to the ‘safety’ of Europe are desperate and hopeless as they are left to rot in the prison-like camp that is Moria.

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zGJnPgOKFYc>

*If you or someone you know is considering self-harm, please seek help through the Greek Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1018*

*Paros (EPAPSY): 22840-22011*

*Naxos (Klimaka): 22850-26982*

# The Forgotten Refugees

By April McLennan



Photo: Paula Camara

**Disabled refugees are washing up on the shores of Greece in search of safety and protection. But all the country has to offer is inhumane living condition and a breach of human rights.**

Refusing to be restricted by her disability, one woman made the journey to the Greek Island of Lesbos across the sea with her wheelchair as she sat in the overcrowded raft.

This woman had been told by the terrorist organisation, Islamic State, that she was forbidden to study at university where she was completing her master's degree, as she was disabled. She was told to stay in the confinement of her home, she wasn't allowed to leave.

Alison Terry-Evan, founder of The Dirty Girls of Lesbos island, recalls meeting this woman and the words she spoke when asked about the limitations of using her wheelchair.

She said, "This is not my prison. My prison is having to stay in the house and not being able to study."

Alison also remembers the boats arriving on the shores and watching as refugees were being carried up the beach because the smugglers had thrown their wheelchairs overboard.

"There's been blind people, there's been people with one leg, no legs, wooden legs or whatever they are made from, prosthetic legs. It's a huge problem," she says.

Since the influx of refugees in 2015, there has been a significant number of disabled refugees arriving in Greece.

"Think of a refugee with a disability coming to Greece, with his or her wheelchair in the sea. Reaching an island. No knowledge of the language, of the social, economical environment, knowing nothing. And with no means. It's easy to arrive at the conclusion of how difficult it is," explains Ioannis Vardakastanis, President of the Greek National Confederation of Disabled People, president of the European Disability Forum and treasurer of the International Disability Alliance.

One arriving in Greece, the asylum seekers are registered, and if they fit certain criteria they will be labelled by the umbrella term of 'vulnerable'. Under this term are countless categories. However, Vardakastanis explains that what his organisation is trying to achieve is the direct registration of persons with disabilities and which impairments they fit into. For example, disability permits, chronic diseases and families that have children with disabilities.

"Here in Greece we have refugees with disabilities, although one could say that some attempts have been made to make the conditions human... it's not easy to use that word. But more bearable, because they are unbearable anyway. I would say that the situation of refugees with disabilities remains very critical."

In the past 3 years since the first refugee arrivals in the country, the government has been unable to ensure that the camps are accessible for all.



Photo: Paula Camara

The Human Rights Watch visited [Elliniko refugee camp](#) in Athens where they discovered that there were no wheelchair accessible toilets so an 8-year-old Afghanistan child had been placed into a diaper so they did not have to make alterations to the camp's infrastructure. He was later moved to an apartment but the camp remains inaccessible for other disabled refugees.

Vardakastanis explains, "Our cities are not prepared for persons with disabilities to move freely around. This does not mean that we should not ask for camps that are fully accessible. But I see sometimes the contradiction between what we do in our everyday life and what we demand in extraordinary situations, which are the creation of camps for refugees. Some of them we have done our best, but if I tell you that Moria is accessible for refugees with disabilities in Lesbos, I would not be honest with you. I think it's not accessible for anybody."

Another refugee camp in Lesbos, Kara Tepe, is run for vulnerable asylum seekers and therefore it does in fact meet the minimal accessibility standards.

However, the poor conditions within the Greek refugee camps are not only the responsibility of the Greek state. But this responsibility also falls onto the United Nations, the High Commission of Refugees and all other European countries that have the means and ability to take disabled refugees within their borders.

Vardakastanis says, “we need to work more to support refugees with disabilities, but it is not only the responsibility of the Greek state. We have been and we are very critical of the Greek state, but we should be fair also. The refugee crisis is not a Greek crisis, it is European, it is a global crisis and it requires European and global response.”

However, the Greek government are required to follow [Article 11 – Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies](#) in accordance with the United Nations Convention of rights of persons with disabilities. It is essential that the state takes all necessary measures to ensure the protection and safety of the disabled refugees.

“I think that refugees with disabilities and migrants with disabilities need to have more attention from those who organise and offer assistance and support of refugees. Usually refugees with disabilities are the invisible refugees. The forgotten refugees,” he says.

The treatment of disabled refugees in Greece, especially in camps around the country is poor and in some cases considered to be inhumane. The State, along with the European Union needs to comply with Article 11 of the United Nations Convention of Situations of risk and humanitarian emergencies and not let the disabled refugees of Greece remain ignored and forgotten.

Video Link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eSJYfMJF\\_c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eSJYfMJF_c)

# Lesvos Island: Where the Dirty Talk is Rubbish

By April McLennan



Photo: April McLennan

**This local municipality is failing to take out the trash as one of Greece's picturesque islands becomes a dumping ground for the Refugee's waste.**

A coastline polluted by the rotting orange of life jackets and rafts as they lay abandoned on the sand. Each flotation device, a representation of a life that has been carried to shore, or lost at sea. This is the scene that has haunted the small Greek Island of Lesvos since 2015 when the first wave of refugees began flooding their shores.

This year, over 13, 289 migrants have made the journey across the Mediterranean Sea, all in an effort to find peace in Europe. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency ([UNHCR](#)), approximately 4,286 of these people have landed in Greece in 2018.

Men, women and children buy the life jackets in Turkey, in order to greater their chances of surviving the journey. Majority of these people are unfamiliar with the ocean and do not know how to swim.

Unfortunately, after testing the floatation devices bought in Turkey by the refugees, it was discovered that they are nothing more than death traps.

Nikos Charalambides, from Green Peace explains, “I saw life jackets in the bottom of the sea and I though ‘it doesn’t make sense... that’s a life jacket.’ And they were heavy as hell because the material was saturated. Because after some time in the water it was just getting water in and getting heavier. If you are falling in the water with that, after some time it’s like carrying stones with you. Maybe for five to twenty minutes it could help.”

The first ones to drown are the children, then the pregnant women and elderly people. Without knowing how to swim and having the weight of a water-filled life jacket pulling them under, they stand little chance.

These deaths are being profited on by the black market of flotation devices that is present on the coastline of Turkey.

Nikos explains, “There were boats that were made for a single use. They were selling the boats while the glue was still wet and the boats were just opening in the middle of the sea. According to the money that you could pay, you could get a proper life jacket”

In an effort to clean up the shores, the flotation devices were moved into big piles in off road areas of Lesvos. From here, some of the materials were taken and tested.



Photo: Green Peace

“We have done an analysis of the composition of the life jackets, each life jacket has seven different types of materials. Some of them could be used, some others could not be used, and some of them could be used as the end product, it could be used for things like the cement industry as fuel, as an additive to fuel. Other parts could be used for sewing bags, other materials,” he said.

Unfortunately, due to the material being exposed to the weather conditions for the past several years, the material has begun to deteriorate. With the most viable option for the rotting material being to take it to the dump and burn it.

However, if the re-use process had begun earlier, the material could have been revived as bags, tents and other items. Although they can never be used as flotation devices again.

“They could not be used as life jackets, because they were never life jackets to be honest,” he says.

To have the practise of faulty flotation devices still being sold in Turkey in 2018, with the European Union making deals with this country yet failing to stop this illegal practise, it brings a harsh light to the situation.

Nikos explains the political reality, in most European countries where populism is on the rise, as is Xenophobia and fear.

He says, “It’s happening there and not somewhere else in the middle of Europe so let’s keep it there... You can even think of making the passage unsafe as part of a wider policy to keep them away from Europe. And as long as you get into this way of thinking, you only turn crazy, because then you start thinking, what’s the cost of a human life. What’s the cost of a few thousands of people... the cost is keeping us “safe” from them. Safe guarding the castle, the fortress that is Europe.”

It is debatable to whether the refugees making the journey across the Mediterranean Sea would have an increased chance of survival if they decided against using the fake life jackets.

However, it is clear that the environmental impact would be lessened if they opted against bringing these floatation devices into Greece.

Through analysis and market research, it was discovered that the life jackets are only a tiny portion of the overall waste management problem in Greece.



Photo: Green Peace

“It was estimated that it was no more than ten percent of the volume of waste produced by refugees, the rest being the normal waste that they have been producing in the camps,” Nikos says.

After the European Union deal with [Turkey in 2016](#), thousands of refugees were stuck in camps for long periods of time. However, they are still using single-use items within the camps for food, water and materials.

Due to the rapid increase of general waste in Lesvos, the municipality face an additional burden as they attempt to manage all of this rubbish.

Flor, from Refuge4Refugees explains how the refugee waste affected them with they were trying to hold swimming classes on the beach.

She says, “when we came there we saw that the beach was full of waste, diapers, and everything. So, in two days we cleaned the whole beach and it was many kilos of waste. Now the beach is ready for the swimming classes and it also looks a lot nicer and the plastic pollution is done because it is a lot of plastic waste.”

This is an attempt by refugee volunteers to give back to the local community of Lesvos by cleaning their beaches up to three times per week. However, the waste is rapidly increasing due to the plastic practises within the camp.

Green Pease Nikos Charalambides says, “We’ve been having, I don’t know the politically correct term for shit fights, with relevant authorities, not just in Lesvos, even in Athens. In Athens, there is a daily distribution of a few thousand portions of food, that’s on a daily basis, twice a day. So, you can imagine, approximately five to seven thousand plastic pots per day. If these people are regular why not give them dishes and wash them. I mean, from any point of view it’s more efficient.”

Without the change from single use plastic to multi-use dishes, the waste management problem will keep increasing, causing added strain on the Lesvos municipality.

The situation of waste management in Lesvos is not high on the municipality’s agenda. A proposal was put forward by Greenpeace to produce less waste in the camps, treat the waste in a wiser manner by separating organic material and increasing the recycling. Unfortunately, this proposal was not met with any enthusiasm from the municipality of Lesvos.

Nikos says, “The number of refugees and their living conditions were higher on their agenda. Combined with the amount of money reaching the local economy. Waste management is seen sometimes as an opportunity to raise some additional funding. But I didn’t see local authorities trying to use it as a real opportunity to revamp and change their own way of managing waste.”

It is not just the single-use, plastic, food related items that are contributing to the waste on Lesvos. The refugee’s clothes have been left polluting the beaches as well as piling up inside the camps.



Photo: Green Peace

Alison Terry-Evans from the Dirty Girls of Lesbos Island explains, "I saw people who were welcoming boats just allowing the clothes to be thrown out and that's good clothes. Because people wear good clothes to make that trip, so that just seemed utterly ridiculous."

Alison decided to start collecting the clothes and washing them. However, due to the mass quantities of clothes she was collecting she had to be using a commercial laundry that was equipped with four, 200 kilogram washing machines.

As she began to sort through the discarded clothes she discovered many unexpected items, "We would find old house keys and you know they have put them in their pocket and that's that. In little kids clothes you would find a little clay tablet sewn in. it's from the Koran and it's for good luck, to be safe."

In the laundry, the machines would run constantly as there were thousands of people arriving on Lesbos each day. However, they would also leave the island just as quickly and their bedding would need to be washed for the next refugees arriving on the island. Instead, the volunteers in the refugee camps had been directed to throw these blankets away.

"Each one of these people were given at least one blanket and then they were being thrown out, which totally horrified me. So, we were collecting them. But I also have to say that I was fighting to get them and that I was literally stealing blankets and dumpster diving to get clothes," she says.

Alison also went as far as sneaking inside the refugee camps, "I would just walk in and direct them to do something different as if I was the person in charge. And I would call my laundry and say, 'get the truck over here, I've got 1000 blankets, let's get them in and out.'"

Despite the generosity from people around Europe and the rest of the world that have been donating their clothes to the refugees, a lot of the clothes are inappropriate due to modesty levels, styles and sizes.

Due to failed cooperation attempts between the Dirty girls of Lesvos Island and UNHCR, a lot of the clothes are being discarded instead or washed and re-used.

Alison says, "There are clothes that I am not getting. I would pick them up from Moria and from the army. They still don't pay for it, UNHCR refuses to pay. They refuse to cooperate and they refuse to pay. I mean, we have saved probably 600 tons, if we had cooperation it would probably be three times that."

The waste management issues that are present in Lesvos are similar to the complications found in other crisis areas as local municipalities struggle to maintain the overflowing rubbish.

She says, "This is happening not just here, this is happening all over the world! If this is the status quo of NGOS, then they are just trashing stuff everywhere. Whether that's blankets, tents, or any kind of material, they just trash them. All of those tons of material is eventually going to turn into greenhouse gasses."

As the link between the waste from refugee camps and climate change refugees continues to be overlooked the problem continues to grow. As there are going to be similar events in the near future, around the globe, NGOs need to learn from their mistakes and become more equipped to cope with the waste management of refugees and other people in crisis situations.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EM3N7AldPqA>

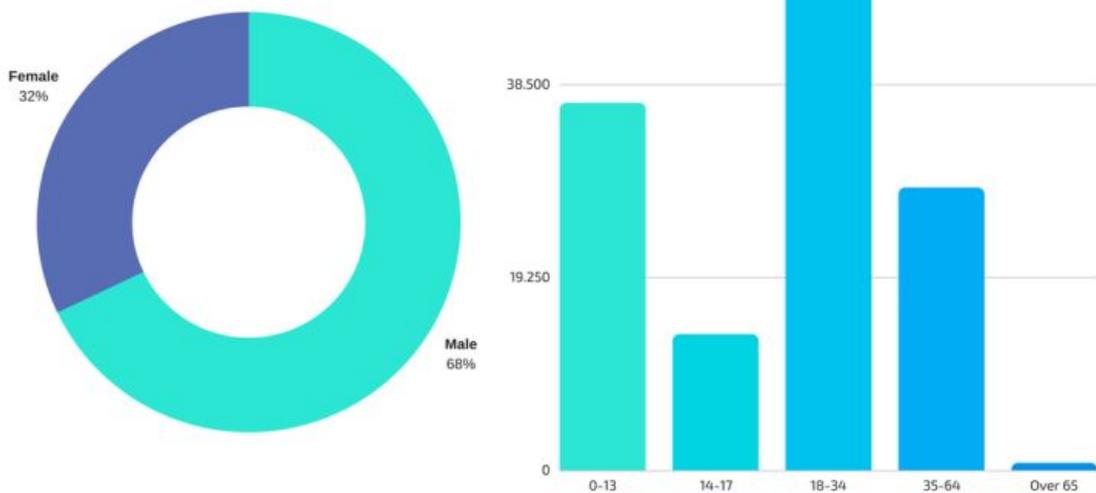
## Single refugee men also a vulnerable group in Greece

By Paula Camara

**“We consider the single men as also a vulnerable group” explains Silvia Giulini, director officer of Generation 2.0, “the organisations help first woman, people with disabilities and kids, but not single men, they are not a priority”. The organisation CARE points out that male refugees, single or living separately from their families, often lack a place within humanitarian response framework. Among organisations and humanitarian services there is a general perception that men are best able to look after themselves.**

“One of the families that I worked with were accepted really fast because they were young and had two small kids” explains Danae Brois volunteer in Greece, “they were easier accepted because it was easier for them to get educated, get a job and get integrated. But it becomes a challenge when it's the case of old men, some of those people may stay here forever” she adds.

## Refugees by sex and age in Greece



Data: Hellenic Republic Source: Paula Cámara

Around 7 out of 10 of the asylum applications between 2013 and April 2018 were done by men. These men, according to CARE, are at risk of being harassed, arrested, imprisoned and detained by the police and Greek security forces. The report also highlights that organizations in Greece are concerned that the situation of these men and boys would translate into depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, isolation and risk-taking behaviours.

The lack of easy access to shelter for all the refugees and the consideration of women as the most vulnerable is shown by the majority of single men in the squats. In one of the squats of the center of Athens lives Javad an Iranian asylum-seeker with two kids.



### Photo Gallery

“In Iran I was involved in activities to support women rights there and that was the reason I had to leave my country “ Javad explains “I continued with that in Syria –where I stayed for 19 years- but then the war took place. Before coming here I lost my wife and I’m here with my two kids. The worst part here is the bureaucracy, is a bit unfair that in some cases people get the asylum really fast and others are living here for a long time. I have been in many NGOs, but I cannot pass this process. I have been living here for 7 months but for a person without any documentation, it is not easy and I can do nothing even for my kids” he adds.

### **From underage to overage**

According to the report of Men and boys in displacement of CARE, in 2016, 91 per cent of [unaccompanied minors](#) were boys. This highlights the fact that young, male refugees are sometimes perceived as a danger and that is the reason why they sometimes create their own little society among one another.

The convention of the child states that a "child" is considered a human being under 18 years old and as Mado Liadopoulou from Network from Children Rights says, "the law is really strict with that". In some cases, as the report from CARE points, some

unaccompanied male minors are often scared too report their real age to the authorities because of the fear of being detained.

“We have had cases of a minors that was 17 years old, that turned 18 and couldn’t ask for family reunification anymore and had to ask for relocation instead” Silvia Giulini explains, “so he is alone in France while the rest of his family is in Germany and it doesn’t make sense” she adds.



Photo Gallery

“A big challenge is to find out if a person that says they are a minor, actually is” Silvia Giulini explains, “in some cases I have been told by other services that if these “minors” were mature enough to do the journey here, they are mature enough to be considered overage” she adds.

Mado Liadopoulou from Network for Children Rights points out that the male minors -even when accepted in the shelters- when they become overage they find themselves alone in the streets. CARE’s report also adds that once they turn 18, lone, young, adult male refugees face a higher risk of becoming homeless.



Photo Gallery

In the same squat than Javad is living, Shahab, “when I arrived to the island I was underage so I came to Athens, where my family was and since that moment I’m here” he explains “part of my family was living in Germany but I couldn’t ask for family reunification since I turned overage” he adds.

“Honestly, I don’t know what will happen to me, they denied my application, they didn’t call me for my second interview” he ends.

## Squats, the new home for hundreds of refugees in Athens

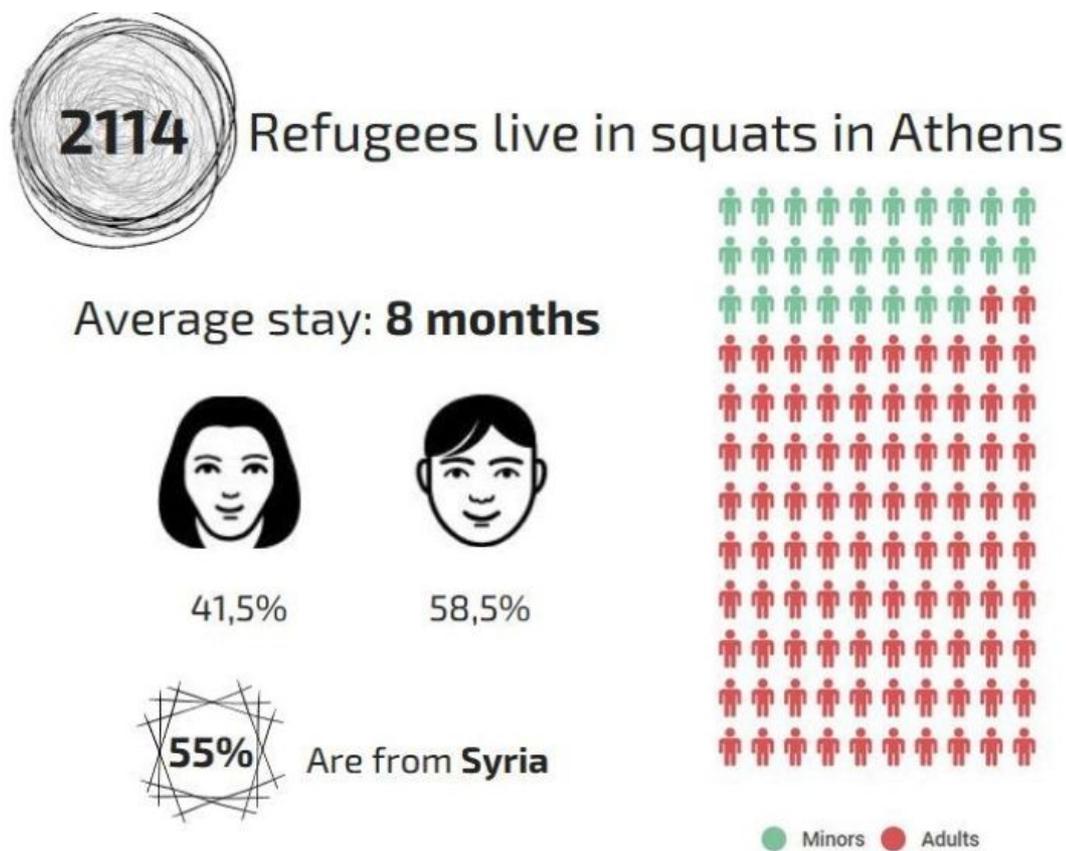
By Paula Camara



“When asylum-seekers come to the mainland, they try to find temporary accommodation because the reception centers cannot host a lot of people. They didn’t have a place to stay so they tried to turn some places in temporary places to stay” explains Mary Stratigou -lawyer and national coordinator of World for Refugees. According to research, in 2017 it was estimated that more than 2,000 people lived in squats in Athens where they found a place to stay after running from their countries.

“When I arrived in Athens I had some money and I rented an apartment. I was new and I didn ’ t know how the things work there” explains Khaleel Tah Bash -Syrian refugee that lived in Greece and is currently living in Germany-, “then I moved to

Jasmine School, a squat near to City Plaza and I stayed there for a time". After arriving to Greece, some people don't have anywhere to go and they choose squats instead of camps for many reasons, according to Mado Liadopoulou -psychologist in Network for children's rights-, "some of them have friends here, know someone from their community or are scared to be sent back".



Infographic: Paula Cámara

"While I was there we experienced a case as dramatic as a woman putting blood between her 6-year-old daughter legs and blaming 3 men of raping her" Mary Beth Bride Leland -volunteer in the squat Jasmine School in Athens- explains, "but it turned out that the mother herself put the blood and nothing had happened, but she did that because she was sleeping under a highway. She was scared and did that to get safe housing for herself and her daughter," she adds.

## Not all the same

“How it is to live in a squat depends on the kind of squat that you are living in” explains Khaleel Tah Bash. “I was living in Jasmine School and it was crazy, it was a school so there were no proper showers or toilets, the living condition there were really bad. Also there were a lot of problems with people fighting, but when I moved to City Plaza it was completely different, it was organised and is one of the best squats” he adds.

Podcast Link: [https://youtu.be/29\\_d0i5eGmg](https://youtu.be/29_d0i5eGmg)

Sometimes, the squat organisation is pointed to as a solution to a problem that the government is not able to solve, but Mary Beth Bride Leland points out that it depends on the integrity of the structure and the leaders of the squat. “I know squats that are communities of people that live together full of happiness and sometimes I experienced that at the Jasmine School, but there were days that **I wished that Jasmine School was completely shut down**, so it is really complicated” she adds.



Photo Gallery

From the eyes of volunteers and residents, depending on the squat, they can be a place to restart their lives or the house of violence and corruption. “If something happened in a bad-condition-squat people **are trapped**. If there is no proof it is the word of someone against someone’s else and they fear going to the police, without papers it is putting yourself at risk. In the Jasmine School the men were much more dominant and it would be scary, if not unsafe for a woman to report it”.

### **Inside a squat**

Inside each building that constitutes a squat there are hundreds of people and families living together, from different nationalities and with **different stories**. In a squat located in the center of Athens -not given the name to protect the residents- lives Ramiz a 28-year-old refugee from Iran.



Ramiz Photo: Paula Cámara

“I went to a demonstration in Afghanistan, a camera recorded us and they started to chase us, those who were caught by the police disappear” he explains “in the process of escaping one of my friends was caught and we haven’t heard from him again. I had to come here, I never thought about moving from my country, leaving my family behind” he adds.

“My goal in life is to go back to Iran and fight for my rights. In my country we have everything: petrol, gas, uranium... **but we don’t have the freedom of expression**” he ends.

## EU 's law sets the path for refugees in Greece

By Paula Camara

"The EU and Turkey deal took place in order to reduce or prevent the huge migrant and refugee flow" explains Mary Stratigou, lawyer and National coordinator of World for Refugees. On the of 7th March 2016 –according to the European Council- Turkey agreed to accept the rapid return of all migrants not in need of international protection crossing from Turkey into Greece.

"This 'solution,' decided by the EU meant that the refugees or migrants have to go back to Turkey and then they can be sent back to their counties" explains Mary Stratigou. The agreement stated that after the 20th of March 2016, when all new irregular migrant crossing from Turkey into the Greek islands would be returned to Turkey. "After that day every boat that was about to come from Turkey could be sent back to Turkey" explains Danae Brois, volunteer in Athens "they considered that in Turkey there is no danger so you don't have a reason to leave, but they could also be considered refugees from Turkey, they are in risk there" she adds.



Map: Google Maps Source: Paula Camara

According with the Human Rights Watch, Turkey is hosting a large number of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees from different nationalities. Most of them lack proper protection or education. Refugees attempting to cross into Turkey are pushed

back and some asylum seekers and smugglers attempting to cross have been shot dead or beaten by border guards.

"The EU could have found a more comprehensive solution to manage this flow" Mary Stratigou explains "the European structure was shocked and not prepared to receive such a large amount of refugees, so this deal was a 'quick' solution. We are talking about human lives, not numbers or things, but human beings that should be treated equally" she adds.



Photo: Paula Cámara

According to Euronews, the European Union countries were supposed to take in a concrete number of refugees depending on the situation of each member state. Malta took 113 percent of the number requested and Finland took 95 percent. Portugal and Netherland only took between 40 and 50 percent. Germany, France and Spain come in last place, with between 30 and 14 per cent. Also the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland didn't take any of the requested.

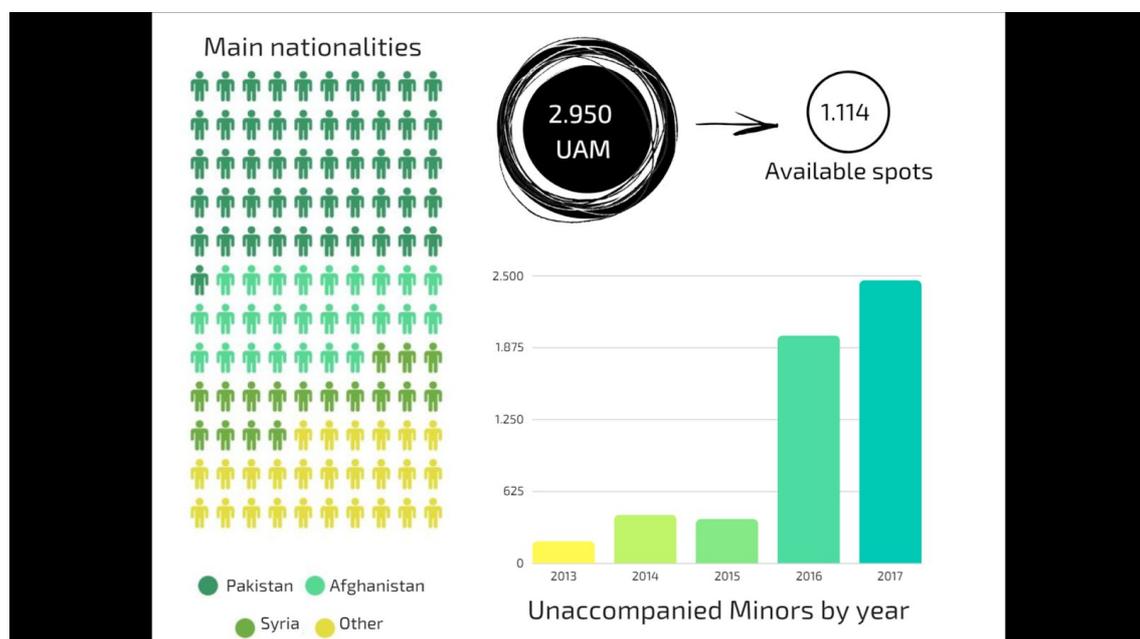
"At this time, we all know how the situation is in Greece" Khaleel Tah Bash, refugee in Greece now living in Germany explains, "I have been living in Germany now for 10 months and most of the people that are here are disappointed with this country. Everything here is slow and complicated. Most of the camps are outside villages or cities and the people are not really willing to have contact with us. In Greece, it is very difficult to live, but at least -while I was there- I didn't have the feeling that they didn't accept me" he adds.

# Prostitution: The Scape Route for Refugee Unaccompanied Minors

By Paula Camara

“There is a huge number of unaccompanied minors (UAM) in Greece. There are so many living in the streets, so many being forced into all sorts of horrific living situation. From being forced into the sex trade or to deal with drugs just to get accommodation” explains Freya Mergler, communication officer at Help for Refugees.

More than 5.000 unaccompanied minors lodged an asylum application, and according to UNICEF, only one out of three of these minors are receiving proper shelter and care. The homeless minors are exposed to several risks, such as as getting involved with drugs or prostitution in order to earn enough money to survive or continue their trip to another country through smugglers.



Data: Asylum Service Ministry for Migration Policy and EKKA, National Center for Solidarity Source: Paula Cámara

“In some cases, families don’t have enough money to travel together. Their only chance is to send one at a time and apply for family reunification. For us, it is very risky to send a girl alone so in most cases, the male kids the one that are sent by the family,” explains Khaleel Tah Bash, refugee from Syria to Greece in 2016, currently living in Germany.

### **Their future in the streets**

“There are many reasons why they are homeless. One is that they are trying to hide from Greek authorities, they are scared to be sent back. And of course there is also a huge waiting list for UAM waiting for the protection system to help them” explains Tassos Smetopoulos founder of STEPS, “the waiting list is for the ones that apply for accommodation so actually there are more homeless UAM than what the official data shows” he adds.

“Omonia is one of the main central squares in Athens, where everyone takes the metro, the police is nearby... Everyone is watching but nobody is seeing what is happening with the minors” Sofia, a volunteer working with minors in STEPS explains. “If you take a seat and observe you can see how the minors interact with the old men that want to pay for sex with them, you can see how the game is played”.

The minors are paid around 10 to 15 euros for sex by the men. “We can’t interrupt them while they are in Omonia, in that moment a “business” is going on. They are trying to get maybe 7 euros, they are trying to survive. We try to approach them when they are alone, it is not safe for them to be seen with us, the old men that ask for their services approach them because they are alone, they don’t know who we are, they may think that we are police officers trying to get information. That is dangerous for the minors, because what the old men are doing is also illegal” Athena, another volunteer in STEP working with minors explains.

Podcast Link: <https://youtu.be/mnPYs9jNZbA>

In some cases, the lack of sexual education or the preferences of the men that pay for sex results in the lack of protection. “The minors don’t have education enough to judge the use or not of the condoms. Also some of the men pay more for not using

condoms, so sometimes it is what the client wants” Sofia explains “sometimes we give them condoms but it’s uncomfortable for them, they are proud, they came proud to Greece and they end up doing this so they don’t want to admit to a stranger what they do” she adds.

“The men that pay for this sex are normal people. You would sit next to them in the metro like nothing happen. They look perfectly normal, like my grandpa or yours. Is how they hide all of this, you don’t pay attention to them” Sofia explains “I have experience walking next to the men while in the square with the minors and even hearing the price.”

### **New Path**

According to NCR and STEPS, majority of the minors that are living on the streets and –in some cases- involved in prostitution and drugs don’t want to stay in Greece, they want to reach other European countries to start their lives there. “They don’t have faith in the system” Tassos Smetopoulos explains “they think that in the streets are more options for them to reach another country through smugglers. The smugglers give them hope and for us the hard part is to explain to them that they cannot reach another country as fast as they want and the way that they want without risking their lives” he adds.

“What we try to do instead is to make them think about registering here in Greece, get accommodation and leave the streets” Sofia explains “their future in Omonia is prostitution and the next step is drugs and they might never get out of it, we try to show them another path that they can follow” she adds.

Video Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fw3UYy02lSI>

According to REACH, 84 per cent of the UAM are between 15 and 17 years old. “When the minors are below 15 the state accepts them immediately, but if you are 16 or 17, unfortunately it takes more time” Mado Liadopoulou, psychologist in Network for Children Rights explains. The convention on the Rights of the Child says that a child is “every human being below the age of eighteen years” and according to Mado Liadopoulou the law is strict in that case. “I understand that when you are 18 not

everything changes in your mind, but for the law if you are one day above 18 you don't have the same rights that the day before" she adds.

#### New Greek refugee law speeds up asylum procedure and increases deportations

On the 18th of May, Greece approved a new law to speed up the asylum procedure for migrants, including travel restrictions imposed on asylum-seekers and increase the number of deportations back to Turkey. "When people enter to the Greek territory they are not automatically recognised as refugees until their documents are checked" Mary Stratigou -lawyer and national coordinator of World for refugees-explains, "if they don't have the documentation needed, it is even harder to give them the asylum, this whole process is generally quite slow, it takes months or even a year and makes this people live in inhuman conditions" she adds.

The 15th of May, a few days before the approval of the law, the Parliament was taking into consideration the approval or not. That day a demonstration took place in front of the building in order to show their dissatisfaction with this law. "In my opinion, today is being voted a racist law that supports sending these people back, they are also human and would be treated in that way" explains Manos Nikolau, participant of the demonstration.

"Letting the people go to the mainland was their opportunity to improve their living conditions and have the basic needs of clean water, for them it was their opportunity to leave that nightmare" explains Mary Stratigou, "that's why the people showed their opposition to this law".



Photo: Paula Cámara

When people arrive to the Greek territory in an irregular way they are not considered refugees, they have to apply for asylum and then they turn into asylum-seekers, a refugee is an asylum-seeker that has been recognized the legal status of refugee. “Nowadays only Syrian people are considered automatically refugees because the ongoing situation there, but people from other countries as Afghanistan, Iraq or Morocco need to fulfill a process and if their documents are not enough they are considered migrants” explains Mary.

“If an asylum-seeker doesn’t have the needed documentation then the procedure becomes harder. The Greek government has a huge workload to be done: identify the person, check if the document is original, cooperate with the country of origin in case of lack of documentation... it’s a vicious circle and takes a lot of time” Mary explains.

While the asylum-seekers wait for their status to be recognised or refused, they may stay in reception centres. The Greek law provides basic guidelines of how the centres should be and the fundamental rights that should be guaranteed but as Mary adds “the law exists but is not always followed, the situation on the mainland is much better than in the islands because they are the first places that the refugees reach.”

Silvia Giuliani -Advocacy Officer of Generation 2.0 for Rights Equality and Diversity-, explains that “it all depends on the interest. In the island they want them to go back. So if you make the conditions worse and worse the news will spread and maybe you can avoid people coming, but the reality is that they keep coming”.

## **Reflection Report**

**The aim of the story; the relevance of the chosen topic – from a societal and journalistic point of view**

The aim of our project is to cover the topic of the refugees that arrive in Greece with the hopes of finding a better life. Our project has a strong focus on how their hopes are shattered by the reality that is a country drowning in an economic crisis. A country that is struggling to manage the flows of refugees that arrive on their shores.

[15,457 people](#) arrived via Turkey on Greece's sea and land borders during March 2018. This is an increase of more than nine times the number of refugees arriving to Greece that month compared with the same time the last year.

Lesvos also [has 9,328 refugees](#) with a total population of 86,436. That means that **1 out of 10 people on the island is a refugee**. The reception and identification center in the island has a capacity of 3,000 people and there is currently an [occupation of 7,300](#).

Despite all of this, it was a challenge to make something news related on the refugee crisis as it is a topic that has been over reported, so we needed to find some fresh, new angles.

### **Your choice of angle/focus. Rejected ideas.**

Despite the extreme amount of coverage already available on our topic, we wanted to highlight the importance of the issue from **different perspectives**. The issues that are not usually on the front page in the media. We wanted to add a new angle to our stories. We wanted to see the whole picture of the refugee crisis from the bottom to up, from smaller and concrete stories: the situation of the unaccompanied minors, the squat organization, the rights of disabled refugees, the environmental impact of the refugee crisis, the mental health of the refugees and also to add some framework, the legislative context.

In order to give enough background to our readers on the topics, we also added some **infographics** with data about the squats, the number of arrivals compared with other years, the main nationalities and the recognition rate depending on the country of origin. Also a **glossary** with some words that can be difficult to understand or differentiate, such as “refugee”, “asylum-seeker” and “migrant”.

That was the idea that we had before leaving, but while doing the interviews and talking with people and learning their stories, it was really hard to keep the focus on what we wanted to do and not to do what has been already done.

While being there we discovered that the single men are a discriminated group of the refugees in Greece.

**Choice of type of media, media outlet and target group. Considerations about how your target group's interests and needs have influenced your work and products.**

Our audience is the people in the world (specially Europe) that are concerned with the situation of the refugees and human rights.

We thought that it was interesting to make some infographics to present our findings in a multimedia way, to make the numbers that we usually hear, more visible. Through using visual data it is easier to keep the audience engaged, especially those of a younger demographic.

When writing all of our articles we had a general idea in mind of which publication we want to pitch it to. For the environmental article we had in mind an environmental magazine, potentially from Western Europe. And for the Mental health article, a sports magazine. Although this affected the way we structured our production to an extent, we found that the most important aspect of our work was to make sure the ideas were new and original. No media publication will want any of our work if it is outdated. For example, when writing about the environment we didn't solely focus on the life jackets on the beach of Lesbos as this has been over reported on. We dug a little deeper and discovered the main environmental impact of the refugee crisis was single-use plastic. This was a fresh angle and something that hasn't really been reported on before.

The Europe in the World Course was beneficial to the overall production of our final exam project as it provided us with the knowledge and techniques to perform such tasks as making a video, or writing a nut graph.

**Your assessment and suggestions as to the publication of your stories through other channels or in different formats.**

We thought that maybe we won't get all our articles published so a good idea was to make a webpage that would hold all the articles with some background information