



Situation Room

**** MIGRATION CONDITION: GREECE ****

Period under review: from January 2021 to 12 April 2021.

[This report is based on publicly available sources to describe a changing situation. Information subject to change.]

Situation analysis recap:

- Currently, there are 91,945 refugees and 80,784 asylum seekers in Greece. Many of them live in refugee camps, which are not appropriate accommodation solutions because of their location in faraway, poorly connected areas. The majority have arrived by crossing the Aegean sea onto the Greek islands.
- At the moment, the top three countries of origin for refugees are Syria (36,013 people), Afghanistan and Iraq. As for asylum seekers, Afghanistan holds the first spot (29,716 people), followed by Syria and Pakistan.
- About 15,300 refugees and asylum seekers reside on the Aegean islands. Of those, 11,500 (75%) reside in the permanent and temporary Reception and Identification Centres. The majority of the population on the islands are from Afghanistan (49%), Syria (16%) and Somalia (8%). Women account for 21% of the population, and children for 26% of whom nearly 7 out of 10 are younger than 12 years old. Approximately 7% of the children are unaccompanied or separated, mainly from Afghanistan.
- In the week from 29 March to 4 April, 78 people arrived on the Aegean islands, a decrease from last week's 171 arrivals but an increase from last year's 39 arrivals during the same period. The average daily arrivals on all islands this week equalled 11, compared to 24 in the previous week. 125 refugees and asylum-seekers departed from the Aegean islands to the mainland. Lesbos received the highest number of arrivals (all 78). The Dodecanese islands, Chios, and Samos received no arrivals.
- Asylum-seekers and refugees are included in Greece's vaccination plan. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) helped establishing screening, isolation and quarantine medical units near reception centres on the islands and mainland Greece and for new arrivals, although the shortage of medical staff has been a significant challenge.
- The UNHCR and the EU both noted the several hundred reported cases of suspected pushbacks in the Aegean Sea since the beginning of last year. Both are stepping up the pressure on Greece to investigate these reports. Confirmed reports of migrants being pushed back after already arriving on European soil in Greece, such as the case of the 13 migrants reaching Lesbos on 17 February, are rare thus far. Although, in April, new reports emerged which called out Greece for its pushback action against migrants. Similar reports have also been increasingly surfacing from the Greek-Turkish land border, especially along the path of the Maritsa river (Meriç in Turkish, Evros in Greek). Migrants are allegedly being pushed back into Turkey before they can even begin to file for asylum.
- Greek police have arrested a group of migrants pretending to enter as a volleyball sports team, which was headed to Vienna using fake passports. With the help of smugglers, migrants have used this method a number of times in the past to try to reach Europe.
- In recent months, numerous fires have broken out in migrant camps across Europe, totally or partially destroying living spaces. Although some of these fires have been caused by arson, the majority were accidental. In Greece, fires broke out in a camp near Thebes, another in the Kara Tepe camp in Lesbos, as well as in an abandoned building in Thessaloniki where three migrants died.

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