



Figure 1: ©Yiannis Yiannakopoulos, MdM-Greece

SITUATION REPORT

MORIA RIC IN FLAMES

Preamble

On 09.09.2020 at around midnight, a fire started in Lesvos RIC, Moria. It's not the first time a fire rips through Moria but this time, it seems the facility has suffered the greatest damage and has been almost burn to the ground. Administrative offices and health facilities, the files of the National Asylum Service, the premises of UN and EASO, have all been destroyed.

There are no certainties with regards to the cause of the fire but it seems tensions among Moria residents sparked when they got to know that there are 35 COVID19



positive cases in the camp and that the facility will enter a lockdown phase. According to locals, the fire was an act of arson as many fires broke out simultaneously at different locations around the camp as well as in two other areas in the island as a diversion. The area around Moria camp has been sealed off and access is still not allowed on the spot.

The Government has declared Lesvos island at a stage of emergency for the next four (4) months for reasons of public health.

No casualties have been reported.

Thousands, including women with babies, children, the elderly, the sick, the disabled, fled in panic carrying some of their possessions. Most took refuge in the hills and the countryside overlooking Moria, while some attempted to walk towards the town of Mytilene, capital of Lesvos. Police forces blockaded the highway towards Mytilene to prevent migrants fleeing to the town.

The camp had an original capacity of 2,800 people, but housed more than 12,000 asylum seekers who now require emergency assistance.

The European Union stands ready to assist Greece “in these difficult times”, European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas said in a tweet after speaking to the Greek Premier reassuring him that the European Commission is ready to assist Greece directly at all levels.

Ylva Johansson, EU Commissioner for Home Affairs, said she agreed to fund the immediate transfer and accommodation on the Greek mainland of the 400 unaccompanied migrant children and teenagers that used to live at Moria RIC.

The German Minister of Foreign Affairs, Haiko Maas, tweeted that “What is happening in Moria is a humanitarian disaster. We have to clarify as quickly as possible with the EU Commission and other helpful EU member states how we can support Greece. This also includes the distribution of refugees among those willing to accept admission in the EU.”

The President of the European Council Charles Michel tweeted “My thoughts go out to all who have been put in danger at the Moria migrant camp. Full solidarity with the people of Lesvos providing shelter, the migrants and staff. We are in touch with the Greek authorities and ready to mobilize support.”



Context

As of 31 July 2020, Greece counts ~121,000 migrants and refugees – 90,600 in the mainland and 30,400 on the islands¹. Reception centers on the islands are overcrowded and conditions are dire with many refugees living in unsuitable tents or makeshift shelters. Medical assistance and WASH facilities are lacking. Women and girls face difficulties in safely accessing services. The five (5) reception centers on the Greek islands, designed for 5,400 people, hosted over 30,000 people. Moria's population was ~12,000 when the fire broke out.

National Response

A press briefing by the Ministers of Migration and Asylum, of Interior and the president of the National Public Health Organization (EODY) was held on Lesbos island on 09.09.2020. Migration and Asylum Minister Notis Mitarakis stated that one thousand asylum seekers, who belong in so-called vulnerable groups and who resided at Moria hotspot prior to the devastating fire, will be accommodated onboard a Blue Star Ferries vessel, expected to dock Mytilini port later on Wednesday and two navy ships that will arrive on Thursday. The rest of the approximately 3,000 asylum seekers, now homeless, will have to be accommodated in tents. Some 3,500 tents and other core relief items will be sent to Moria from other parts of Greece.

Needs and Gaps

What is slowly becoming clear is that there is a new caseload of ~12,000 homeless people. Shelter thus remains a top priority, especially as the winter is coming. Even if the government's plans for hosting people on vessels offshore Lesbos and at two (2) military camps on the island -the latest solution already rejected by the local municipal council-work, there is still a caseload of at least 5,000 people with very vulnerable cases among them that will remain in tents, out in the open, in between Moria village and Mytilene port.

What is already known as well is that health is an equally important need: these people's health is already challenging. There are a lot a vulnerable people, pregnant

women and elderly, there are positive or suspected COVID19 cases, chronic patients, people in shock, people having experienced physical and/or psychological trauma. At the same time, Public Health System in Greece and Lesbos has its own limitations exacerbated by Greece's socioeconomic crisis and Greece's and Europe's reception crisis. According to European Observatory of WHO on Health Systems and Policies, Greece ranks very low in health system surge capacity², lacks a balanced distribution



Figure 2: ©Yiannis Yiannakopoulos, MdM-Greece

of health care resources and personnel, and adequate mechanisms for planning and managing it³. Mytilene's hospital and ICU are already having difficulty to manage.

People staying in tents will also need all sorts of NFIs in order to set up their households. Most carried few belongings with them, other nothing. Women and children in particular, that amount to approximately half of this population are in dire need of gender and age sensitive material.

In Lesbos, several NGOs were forced to reduce or close services over safety fears and many NGO workers have left the island following the surge in racist attacks and threats by locals. Operations taking place in the framework of the current emergency have to take under serious consideration potential security threats, draft and implement accordingly security and evacuation plans

2 The ability of the healthcare system to triage and treat patients at times of large-scale surge in demand for services. Surge capacity has four elements: 1) staff (medical personnel, doctors, nurses, pharmacists), stuff (equipment, supplies), structures (hospitals) and systems (successful coordination and management of various levels of the healthcare system).

3 OECD Greece: Country Health Profile 2019, State of Health in the EU, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/d87da56a-en>. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/state/docs/2019_chp_gr_greece.pdf



Figure 3: ©Yiannis Yiannakopoulos, MdM-Greece

MDM-Greece Response

MdM-Greece field coordinator approached Moria entrance the morning after the fire. At the time only the authorized fire brigade vehicles could enter the facility.

Access is still denied not only in Moria but also to Kara Tepe camp as the roads remain closed by locals and the police. MdM-Greece formed an emergency medical team on the spot, the day after the fire. MdM-Greece medical staff performed consultations and examined patients on the road, especially pregnant women that were in immediate need of assistance.

MdM-Greece is already in Lesvos and already in contact and collaboration with MoH/ EODY. Both are also in contact and collaboration with the respective UN agencies.



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Doctors of the World - Greece

12 Sapphus Str, 105 53 Athens, Greece

T: +30.210.32.13.150, F: +30.210.32.13.850, e-Mail: info@mdmgreece.gr

www.mdmgreece.gr