

**MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES**  
**ΓΙΑΤΡΟΙ ΧΩΡΙΣ ΣΥΝΟΡΑ**

MSF/Evgenia Choroou

# Médecins Sans Frontières in Greece **Activity Report 2021**

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## CONTEXT

**Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has been providing medical and humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers, refugees and migrants** in Greece since 1996. In 2015, MSF expanded its activities in Greece to meet the humanitarian needs of people on the move arriving in Greece. MSF set up emergency interventions on Lesbos, Samos, and Chios, as well as the Dodecanese Islands, Athens, and border town of Idomeni providing medical and mental health care, shelter, water, and sanitation services and distributing relief items to refugees and migrants.

Between December 2015 and March 2016, MSF conducted life-saving search and rescue operations in the Aegean Sea, off the coast of Lesbos, and provided medical assistance at landing points. In March 2016, MSF decided to suspend all its activities inside the Moria 'hotspot' after the EU-Turkey Deal. Since 2016, MSF has remained on the Greek islands to provide medical and mental healthcare to migrants on the islands of Lesbos and Samos.

**Our activities include** providing mental health care to children and adults, vaccinating children against common childhood diseases, providing sexual and reproductive healthcare, treating chronic diseases and providing water and sanitation services. In 2021, MSF ran two clinics in Athens, a day center providing medical and mental healthcare and a specialized clinic for survivors of torture and ill-treatment. It also ran an Access to Vaccination Against COVID-19 (AVAC-19) project, focusing on increasing awareness on COVID-19 to reduce misinformation through outreach activities in urban Athens. The initiative aimed at assisting vulnerable people and refugee and migrant populations to overcome administrative barriers and provide access to vaccination.

According to UNHCR, in 2021 a total of 4,331 people reached Greece by sea. The main nationalities composing new arrivals in 2021 were Afghanistan (20%), Somalia (20%), State of Palestine (15%), Iraq (7%) and Syrian Arab Republic (7%). Almost half of the population were women (19%) and children (29%), while 52% were men.

**2021 was a year of transition** for the refugee and migration issue in Greece. The Greek government introduced a wave of new restrictions on migration, including successive Joint Ministerial Decisions declaring Turkey a safe third country for asylum seekers of 5 specific nationalities. Subsequently, there has been a sharp increase in numbers of people whose asylum claim has been considered inadmissible under the 'safe country of origin' concept which applies for 17 different nationalities. Changes as to how asylum claims are registered, were introduced in November 2021, meaning that people could only apply for asylum on five Aegean Islands or the Evros border, or through two other mainland sites that were not identified at the time. Many pending asylum appointments through a skype service were also cancelled without justification. These dynamics have likely resulted in increasing numbers of people living illegally, excluded from all services and at risk of detention. In addition, a ministerial decision was introduced, stating that in order to proceed with a subsequent request in their asylum procedure, asylum seekers need to pay 100 euros per person.

**The first high security 'Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC)** was inaugurated on Samos in September 2021, with people moved from the old Vathy camp located right in the centre of Vathy town. Simultaneously throughout late 2021, thousands of people were transferred from the islands to the

mainland under a 'decongestion' policy. Together with low arrivals, this has led to significant reductions in numbers of asylum seekers and refugees on Samos, with around 300 people in the CCAC. Since November 2021, Samos CCAC restricted all people without an asylum ID from entering or leaving.

2021 has seen a steady reduction in services for asylum seekers, including downsizing the ESTIA accommodation program from 26,000 to 10,000 places. Delays in cash distributions since responsibility was handed over from UNHCR to the government in October 2021, seem to have induced an increasing lack of access to food on the mainland, with an increasing number of people forced into exploitative labor such as sex work, begging and stealing in order to survive.

At the same time, COVID-19 restrictions and the multiple lock downs affected the population MSF serves. A vast majority of the target population (especially the undocumented) was not vaccinated against COVID-19, resulting in restrictions of movement and access to services; an increasing number of people afraid to move freely did not access MSF medical services in all projects.

Over the years, MSF has treated the physical and mental wounds that migration policies and measures have inflicted on men, women and children who came to Europe searching for protection and instead, are met with inadequate living conditions and insufficient access to basic services, including healthcare. In the following pages you can find information about the medical activities provided by MSF in Greece in 2021.





# ATHENS

# DAY CARE CENTRE

In September 2016, in order to respond to the medical and mental health needs of vulnerable people in Athens, MSF opened its Day Care Center (DCC). MSF DCC provides sexual and reproductive healthcare, mental health activities, care for victims of sexual violence and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. In July 2017, the center began providing patients with treatment for non-communicable diseases and a supplementary comprehensive social support package to cover the needs of patients staying in Athens on a longer-term basis. Ever since, there has been support for referrals to the national healthcare system, with cultural mediators accompanying patients to their follow-up appointments at hospitals. In February 2021, a mobile clinic and an outreach team started running health promotion and education sessions in shelters around the city and serviced two mainland camps: Elaionas and Malakasa.

## Key challenges

Governmental policies and changes in legislation have resulted in a reduced overall number of consultations of patients in the Athens Day Care Centre. As mentioned above the designation of Turkey as a safe third country for certain nationalities and the introduction of the "safe third country of origin" resulted in an increase of rejections of asylum claims, pushing people to flee Greece irregularly. In addition, the implemented fast-track procedures on the claims for protection status has also pushed many refugees to leave Greece using a legal path aiming at applying anew for international protection in other EU member states.

In 2021, the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected the MSF Athens Day Care Centre and the patients' ability to access its services. At the time, COVID-19 regulations made it mandatory to book an appointment prior to a visit to the DCC, leading to an increased number of no shows. Moreover, other pandemic measures, such as teleworking, further burdened operations and

impacted both employees and patients.

## Sexual Reproductive Health

Our sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) services still represent the majority of consultations provided by our teams in the DCC, although we observed a certain decrease compared to previous years, with 5 178 consultations in 2021 (vs 7 248 in 2020). A standard path for patients who suffered sexual violence has been ongoing in DCC since early 2017, with a systematic screening of sexual violence in all first sexual and reproductive healthcare consultations. In 2021, 21% of first consultations for sexual and gender-based violence survivors occurred within 72 hours after the assault, which shows an increase compared to 2020.

**Total number of sexual health and reproductive consultations in 2021** **5.178**

**Total number of Ante Natal consultations** **890**

**Total Number of Post Natal consultations** **66**

**Total Number of Family Planning consultations** **1.695**

**Total Number of Gynecological consultations** **1.858**

**Total Number of sexual violence consultations** **669**

## Mental Health

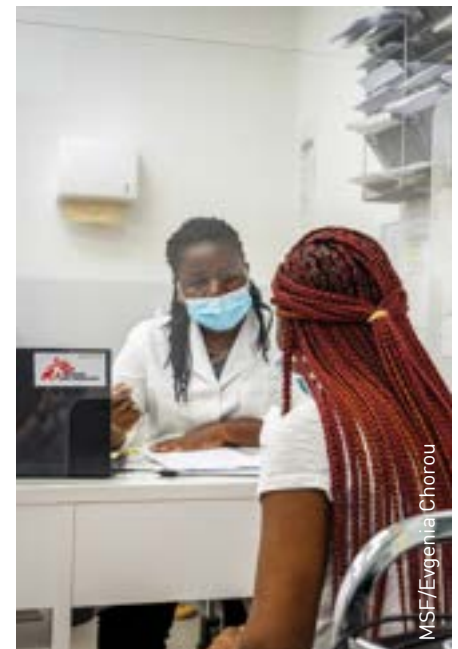
The main mental health symptoms of the patients visiting the Day Care Centre in 2021 were depression and trauma-related symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sexual violence outside family, forced migration

and displacement were the main precipitating factors for patients seen by our mental health team in the Day Care Centre in 2021.

**Total number of mental health consultations** **4.244**

**Total number of mental health group sessions** **114**

**In 2021, 1.121 consultations were carried out by a psychiatrist.**



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



MSF/Evgenia Chorou

## Non-Communicable Diseases

Activities related to non-communicable diseases continued throughout 2021, reaching a total of 1,455 consultations. Compared to the total of 2020, there was a reduction of 9.6% in the total number of consultations.

**Total number of non-communicable diseases consultations** ▶ **1.455**

## Social and Legal Services

The DCC's social and legal services team consists of a social service manager, social workers and a legal officer. The social workers help people navigate Greece's bureaucratic social and health system, and support them in obtaining, for example, social security numbers or medication for undocumented chronic patients. The legal officer provides legal support to DCC patients; this can include preparation for asylum interviews or help overcoming access to health services issues when the case presents legal challenges. Additionally, the legal officer is responsible for communicating with the Asylum Service to arrange appointments for the registration of vulnerable patients. Depending on the needs, the legal officer also escorts vulnerable patients to Athens' Regional Asylum Office for interviews.

**Total number of consultations carried out by social workers** ▶ **600**

Out of the 453 patients who received support from the social work, 44,9% were homeless, 69,5% did not have any type of social security number and 55,5% were undocumented.

**Total number of requests carried out by the legal department** ▶ **528**

The overall numbers of socio-legal services depict the complexity of factors such as the legal status and the economic and social support needed by the people as well as

the impact these have on the access and stabilization of their health and improved well-being. Complex administrative barriers and inconsistent implementation of the law by all public services hamper access to proper treatment for refugees and migrants, even for people with an AMKA (social security number). Long waiting times in hospitals and understaffed HC facilities, in conjunction with the language barrier, make access to health care very difficult. By the time people reach the hospital with a variety of underlying health problems it may already be too late for effective treatment. This is especially very concerning for people with chronic diseases. At the same time, many undocumented migrants fear punitive actions due to their non-regularized status, if they step forward and seek healthcare in a hospital. As a result, high numbers of people remain invisible in the social welfare system which consequently aggravates their health status. Social workers and legal officers are working on a case-by-case basis to resolve medical and social issues, facing insurmountable difficulties and in spite of the lack or interruption of some of the referral services.

## Health Promotion

In March 2021, a mobile clinic started visiting once a week Elaionas camp, near the city of Athens and providing SRH and health promotion services to the residents while referring patients to MSF DCC, public hospitals and other NGOs. In July, the activity was expanded to a second camp outside Athens, Malakasa. The mobile clinics staffed with health promoters allowed us to monitor and gain a better overview of the needs of people in Attica and also promote our services in the DCC.

**Total number of people reached in 2021** ▶ **26.457**

## Cultural Mediation

Cultural mediators are essential to MSF activities in Greece. They provide cultural-sensitive translation in all consultations and health-promotion activities, ensuring that the patients' needs, and healthcare advice and counseling are well understood. The total number of

cultural mediation (CM) interactions in the DCC in 2021 was 42,471. On 484 occasions, MSF cultural mediators accompanied patients during referrals to external health facilities for further medical examinations or secondary healthcare.

**Total number of cultural mediation interpretations** ▶ **42.471**



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# SURVIVORS OF TORTURE CLINIC

MSF, in partnership with Babel and the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), ran a clinic for Survivors of Torture (SoT) in Athens since October 2014. The clinic provides comprehensive care to survivors of torture and ill-treatment. The team has developed a multidisciplinary approach to help survivors cope with the medical and mental health consequences of the systematic violence they have been subjected to. Survivors are offered social support as well as legal aid to facilitate their access to the asylum system.

MSF's decision to set-up activities for the rehabilitation of survivors of torture (SoTs) in Athens came as a response to a clearly identified gap: the medical and humanitarian needs of individual asylum seekers and recognised refugees who have suffered torture were unmet. MSF's contribution has been essential to enhance the overall capacity of the rehabilitation services and to develop its medical component as well as to reinforce the existing Mental Health and Social Work support provided by the partners.

During its 7 years of operation, the SoT clinic offered services to about 1,000 patients and did more than 23,000 sessions of medical, mental health, physiotherapy and social work consultations. The clinic concluded its activity in December 2021.

## Key challenges

The closure of the SoT clinic in December 2021, led to referrals and handover of case work services to external/partner organizations. Referrals to other organizations to handle the case work service of SoT was challenging as the majority of the social services don't have the resources or operate in a holistic approach like the SOT clinic. In total, 23 patients were referred to other social services for continuity of support.

## Highlights

In March 2021, the community "PM+ interventions" was introduced to the project. Project Management plus (PM+), is a WHO developed evidence-based intervention for people who have mild-moderate depression, anxiety, or stress. It can be given individually or in groups and follows structured manuals.

By the end of November 2021, all mental health patients had been discharged according to their treatment plan or handed over to Babel or Diotima for long-term care.

The cultural mediation department kept on supporting a high number of accompaniments, especially for more complex cases, in order to guarantee the best quality of care to the patients.

Total number of medical health consultations in 2021	1.030
Total number of mental health consultations	1.084
Total number of social work consultations	1.098
Total number of physiotherapy consultations	755



# ACCESS TO VACCINATION AGAINST COVID-19 PROJECT

Although the Greek government initiated vaccination campaigns inside the Reception and Identification Centres (RICs) and camps in June 2021, there were no official data available regarding the vaccination of refugee and migrant population. Based on MSF field monitoring and according to other NGO reports, participation of refugee and migrant population in vaccination campaigns was low among all age groups. Little was done to ensure effective access to vaccination to the vulnerable migrants and asylum seekers outside the camps.

The information available on prevention against COVID-19 was inadequate for people who don't speak Greek, leaving refugees, asylum seekers and migrants further exposed to misinformation and fake news. This led to high hesitancy and adversely impacted the vaccination rate. Other administrative and legal barriers further complicated the access to COVID-19 vaccines. Combined with the limited available information on the access of migrants and refugees to vaccination against COVID-19, it became nearly impossible for them to get vaccinated. For similar reasons, undocumented and homeless people in Athens, including Greek homeless people, faced a lack of access to COVID-19 vaccination.

The center of Athens, especially after the government's effort to decongest the islands, became a hub for asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented people. They lived in inadequate conditions, with limited to no access to healthcare and the social welfare system. An MSF COVID-19 support project would enhance access to the COVID-19 vaccination for the vulnerable people.

Since August 2021, MSF has been running an Access to Vaccination Against COVID-19 (AVAC-19) project in downtown Athens. The project focused on two main axes: increasing awareness on COVID-19 to reduce misinformation through outreach activities in urban Athens and assisting vulnerable people and refugee and migrant populations to

overcome administrative barriers and providing access to vaccination. The services were offered in Arabic, French, Farsi, Urdu, Spanish, English, Greek and Turkish.

## Key challenges

In November 2021, Greece introduced nationwide measures that limited access to public services for people without proof of COVID-19 negativity or those who were not fully vaccinated. Some hospitals requested proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test to allow people seeking healthcare inside their premises. Unable to access vaccines and without money to pay for COVID-19 tests, the already vulnerable people found themselves stuck in an impossible situation, with no access to basic health care services.

The number of vaccination certificates issued was low compared to the booked vaccination appointments. Certificate can only be issued if people have a social security number: either AMKA (regular social security number) or PAAYPA (temporary social security number for asylum applicants, only valid while their asylum claim is open). Access to social security numbers is infested with barriers and only 1 119 social security numbers were issued or activated in 2021 through the MSF project. Another reason contributing to the low rate of certificates compared to appointments was that vaccination certificates are issued by the Citizen Service Centers (CSC), that were not always collaborative.

## Highlights

A digital health promotion campaign was launched on social media, targeting specific virtual community groups in several languages and addressing different vulnerable populations in Athens.

Continuous MSF advocacy activities targeting the multiple bureaucratic barriers of access to vaccination contributed to the issuance of a Joint

Ministerial Decision facilitating the process.

Total number of informative sessions conducted	▶ 1.009
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Total number of cases handled by the social service	▶ 1.365
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Total number of appointments booked for vaccination	▶ 1.884
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Total number of vaccination certificates issued	▶ 366
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Total number of booked vaccination appointments in the MSF registration centre	▶ 755
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866 people completed one-to-one informative sessions regarding COVID-19. 72% of the total number of people who attended a one-to-one info session, stated that their level of awareness on COVID-19 increased and therefore they were less hesitant to be vaccinated.

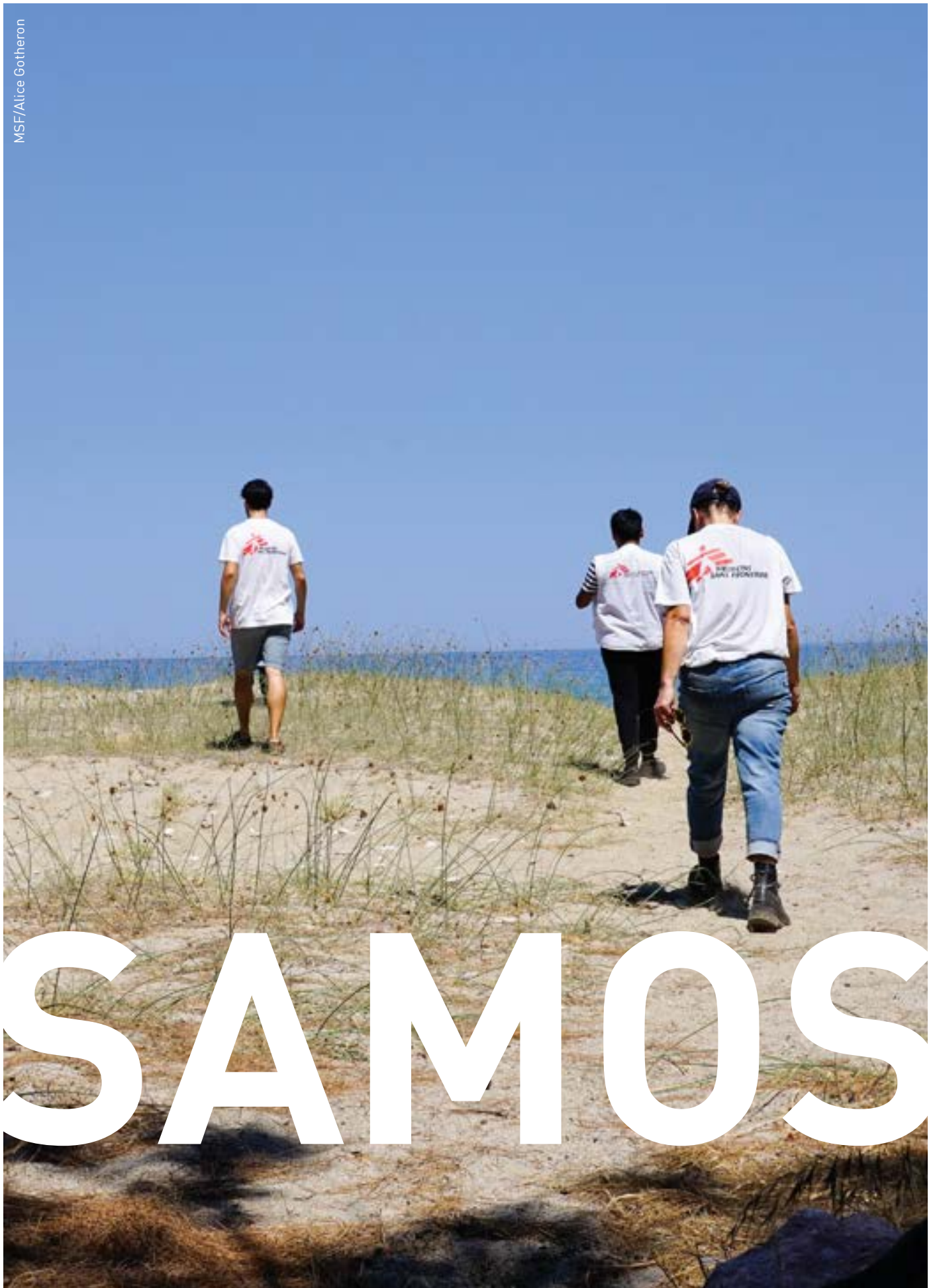
The success of the AVAC-19 project rests in the fact that out of all 2 745 people who visited our premises and requested assistance, 71% or 1970 received their COVID-19 vaccine.



MSF/Evgenia Chourou

<sup>1</sup>Cf. HP digital tool (online survey) measuring increase in awareness among targeted population as a result of info sessions.





# SAMOS

## DAY CARE CENTRE

MSF has been assisting refugees, migrants and asylum-seekers on the island of Samos since October 2015, mainly through mental health services and a temporary shelter for vulnerable people. MSF has adapted its activities in Samos over time. In 2018, MSF handed over its activities to other organizations as the population of Vathy Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) decreased. Due to an increase in arrivals during the summer of 2019 and to the further deterioration of living conditions in Vathy reception centre, MSF returned to the island so as to initiate a medical response focusing on mental health, sexual and reproductive health and travel medicine services for the refugees, asylum seekers and migrants living in the centre. In addition, MSF established a sexual and reproductive health Day Care Centre in Vathy. In the beginning of 2021, MSF medical activities were focused on sexual and reproductive health, mental health and health promotion services, while there was a strong focus on the water and sanitation health (WASH) component in the old camp.

In September 2021 a new Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) was inaugurated in Samos and the population of Vathy RIC was transferred there. After the movement to the CCAC in September and the consequent decrease in the population due to significant transfers out of the island, MSF closed its WASH activity. A new field clinic was established right outside the camp to offer patients access to MSF healthcare services.

Since August 2021, a new activity was initiated to respond and provide medical emergency aid to people arriving on Samos island by boat, as well as food and NFI (dry clothes). After the MSF team provides emergency assistance, the newly arrived people are transferred by the authorities to the CCAC for registration.

### Key challenges

2021 was a year with many contextual changes on Samos island. Initially MSF activities took place in the main town of Vathy near the old

RIC, allowing patients easy access to MSF services. At the beginning of the year the government started the construction of the new CCAC on the island, in a remote area further away from town. From May 2021 onwards, MSF witnessed an abrupt drop in the resident population of patients on the island due to massive transfers to the mainland. Indicatively, the population in the old camp numbered 2,500 people in May and 1,500 in July and eventually only 300 people were transferred to the new CCAC in September. Following the transfer MSF team established a field clinic 300 meters away from the new camp.

The low population numbers however, along with the policy of restrictions imposed by the Greek government and applied to the new CCAC discouraged more and more the patients from exiting the camp and consequently visiting MSF field clinic. This had a profound impact on the volume of activities.

Lastly, since November 2021, people who do not have a valid asylum applicant card have not been allowed to exit the CCAC except for legal or medical reasons following agreement with the camp management. This rule applies to newly arrived people who are registered at the CCAC in Samos for the first time and are yet to receive a valid asylum applicant card, hence detained for an unspecified period of time as well as to people whose asylum claim has been rejected. This measure resulted in further limited access of the population to MSF healthcare services.

### Sexual Reproductive Health

COVID-19 restrictions imposed in 2021 impacted the number of patients visiting the MSF field clinic close to the new CCAC and especially the number of new sexual and reproductive health cases. Moreover, since the beginning of 2021, authorities have transferred people from the old RIC in Vathy to the mainland, prioritizing women and children due to vulnerability criteria. This led to a decrease in

demand for sexual and reproductive consultations. On top of the reduced number of women in the camp, the increased security measures restricting movement in and out of the new CCAC from September 2021 onwards, resulted in limited access of the population to MSF services.

<b>Total number of sexual reproductive health consultations for 2021</b>	<b>1.031</b>
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<b>Total number of ante natal care consultations</b>	<b>291</b>
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<b>Total number of post-natal care consultations</b>	<b>158</b>
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<b>Total number of family planning consultations</b>	<b>176</b>
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<b>Total number of gynaecological consultations</b>	<b>406</b>
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**In addition to these numbers, in 2021, MSF teams conducted 71 consultations for sexual violence survivors.**

### Mental Health

From January to May 2021, the number of mental health patients was stable, with an increase of self-referred patients. This was a time marked by uncertainty regarding transfers to the mainland, as well as increases in cases with a second asylum rejection. May to September 2021 showed an increase of patients with suicidal ideation as well as self-harm tendency, mostly due to the living conditions in the old RIC in Vathy and contextual risks, such as insecurity, long-lasting asylum process and lack of access to health care. From September 2021 onwards, following the transfer to the new CACC, the number of patients in need of psychiatric medication dropped, as most severe cases were transferred to the mainland.

The most common precipitating factors for mental health were physical violence and repeatedly



forced displacement, while the main diagnoses were depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). From November 2021 onwards, following the application of movement restrictions, some of our patients had trouble accessing our services.

**Total number of mental health consultations for 2021 was**

**1.755** of which **1.210**

were carried out by a team of

psychologists, while **545** were psychiatric consultations.

in order to be granted entry. Furthermore, on several occasions, CCAC management scrutinized the content of informative MSF flyers distributed to the population by our health promotion team, while during the last trimester of 2021 the team had to enter the CCAC accompanied by a security guard. Such controlling practices caused hesitance among the population to reach out to MSF health promotion teams.

**Total number of health promotion sessions in 2021**

**10.487**

## Health Promotion

In 2021, the MSF Health Promotion team supported the population in Vathy RIC with different awareness sessions adapted to the needs: fire and safety, sexual violence, family planning, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), personal hygiene, COVID-19 protection measures and mental health. Throughout the year, health promotion activities were highly affected by COVID-19 restrictions and had to be paused several times.

After the transfer of the population from the old RIC in Vathy to the new CCAC, the health promotion team was the only MSF team that succeeded in maintaining access and entering the new centre. However, since November 2021 (when CCAC access restrictions were applied), MSF has had to submit formal requests to the camp management

## Water and Sanitation

Since September 2019, MSF provided water and sanitation services in the areas outside Vathy RIC, in response to a lack of drinking water and sanitation facilities for the majority of the people staying outside the official facility. Our water and sanitation team continued to provide daily support to the residents in the surroundings of Vathy RIC with potable water and chemical toilets. Between June and September 2021, we managed to establish a setup with showers inside the old centre. Daily management of the showers was conducted by NGOs on the ground, while MSF teams were in charge of maintenance. Additionally, we continued vector control activities with the placement and management of 150 rat traps supported by dedicated personnel to ensure the

safety and efficiency of the activity. Three more double hand-washing points were placed around the camp in proximity to a set of latrines we built to improve hygiene.

## Emergency Medical Aid to new arrivals

The Emergency Medical Aid to new arrivals activity, defined as medical and psychological first aid (PFA), food, water and NFI support (clean and dry clothes), was offered to people newly arrived on Samos prior to their reception by the authorities, since August 2021. Emergency referrals to the hospital are implemented in collaboration with the authorities. The newly arrived people are subsequently transferred by the Police to the CCAC for registration.

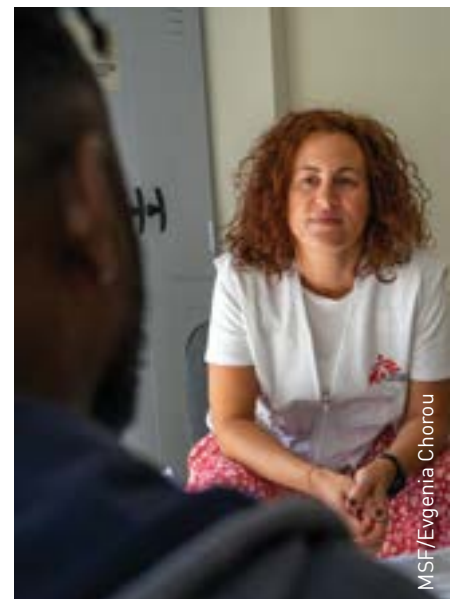
The activity was paused in October 2021, pending internal evaluation and risk analysis. Between August and October 2021, MSF teams provided emergency medical aid to 137 people who arrived on the island.



MSF/Alice Gotheron



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



# LESVOS

# CLINICS IN MORIA, MYTILENE AND MAVROVOUNI

MSF has been working on the island of Lesbos since July 2008, when it provided medical assistance in a detention centre for migrants. Between the closure of this project in late 2008 and 2014, MSF ran several ad hoc activities responding to the medical needs of migrants on the island. In 2015, MSF scaled up its activities on Lesbos, which included mobile medical clinics, transport for asylum-seekers across the island, as well as setting up camps. In March 2016, Moria camp became a pre-removal detention center, offering little guarantee of respect for human rights, and MSF decided to halt all its activities there. In September 2016, MSF opened a clinic in Mytilene town offering sexual and reproductive healthcare, treatment for chronic diseases and mental health support. Since August 2017, the services of this clinic have focused on the medical and mental health needs of victims of violence, survivors of torture and sexual violence as well as on patients experiencing severe mental health problems. In November 2017, MSF opened an additional clinic just outside the Moria reception centre, offering paediatric care for children and adolescents under 16 and care for pregnant women staying in the detention centre. Until the end of 2020, the clinic provided primary healthcare for children, including vaccinations; mental health support for children; and antenatal and postnatal care for women. MSF referred patients, including women with high-risk pregnancies, to the local hospital when they needed emergency care or specialized medical attention.

After the blaze that burnt down the Moria reception and identification centre (RIC) in September 2020, a new tented camp was hastily set up in Mavrovouni by authorities with the support of UNHCR, IOM and the European commission and the population was transferred there. In 2021, the number of arrivals on the Greek islands was drastically reduced. In an attempt to decongest the centres on the islands, many people were transferred to camps in the mainland or were allowed leave without documents and continue their journey through irregular

routes. With less overcrowding in the centre, living conditions slightly improved compared to 2020, but still remained undignified and inadequate. People were suffering from the weather (cold winds in winter, heat in summer), as the centre is located in a highly exposed area near the sea. During winter, people reported that due to the faulty power supply in the camp, there were often electricity shortages, short circuits or misuse of electricity, leading to fire incidents. Sanitation was also a major problem in the centre with no proper garbage or food waste management. As a consequence, patients reported presence of cockroaches, mice and ticks as well as bedbugs.

In 2021, MSF provided mental health and sexual and reproductive health services to people in the Sea House clinic across the Mavrovouni RIC and mental health in the Mytilene clinic. Primary health care and screening were provided with a mobile clinic in the new arrivals site located in Megala Therma. MSF in Lesbos also maintained a casework department that cared for the social and legal needs of the patients.

## Key challenges

Access to medical services outside Mavrovouni RIC for refugees and migrants were limited, as due to COVID-19 restrictions, exit options were limited to 3 times a week for 3 hours.

The fast-track asylum procedures once again didn't allow sufficient time for the identification and then adequate support / representation of vulnerable migrants and refugees.

The aforementioned joint ministerial decision introducing the safe third country concept and denied certain nationalities access to asylum in Greece. When their applications are rejected, migrants are left in limbo, without access to medical care or assistance, in risk of detention, homelessness and destitution and are pushed into fleeing anew in search of safety.

## Mental Health

In 2021, there were 298 adult mental health patients in Mytilene clinic, while there were 225 children mental health patients.

**Total number of individual mental health consultations** **3.299**

**Total number of group mental health consultations in Mytilene clinic: 400 (adult and children)** **400**

**In 2021, 362 consultations were provided by a psychiatrist.**



MSF/Anna Pantelia



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



## Medical Consultations

In 2021, the MSF team in Lesvos provided 465 medical consultations. In 2021, MSF in Lesvos vaccinated 1,457 children in the camp but also children in accommodations outside the camp. Children received Penta valent, pneumococcal (PCV), MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) and hepatitis b vaccines.

## Case Work and Legal Aid

In 2021, the MSF casework department in Lesvos provided support to 387 people.

## Sexual Reproductive Health

Total number of Ante Natal Care consultations	▶	<b>411</b>
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Total number Post Natal Care consultations	▶	<b>104</b>
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Total number of Family planning consultations	▶	<b>461</b>
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Total number of sexual violence consultation	▶	<b>276</b>
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In 2021, the MSF team provided **276** sexual violence sessions in 24 males and 106 females.



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



MSF/Evgenia Chorou



# ADVOCACY & COMMUNICATIONS

Throughout 2021 MSF has witnessed the ongoing and devastating humanitarian consequences of EU's policies of containment and deterrence, on the Aegean islands and the Greek mainland. MSF has continued to speak out against these harmful policies and has maintained pressure on policymakers, using data from our medical-humanitarian work to demonstrate the harm caused, sharing regular updates, briefings and lobbying at national and regional level.

- In February 2021, MSF in partnership with Refugee Support Aegean and Pro Asyl published a statement on the lack of procedural safeguards in the border procedure for vulnerable asylum seekers, especially survivors of violence, and the significant concerns related to their wellbeing and health, including re-traumatization. In addition to the statement, the organizations continued to highlight the needs of survivors of violence in relation to adequate accommodation, protection, and medical services, as well as the recognition of medical certification from qualified medical and mental health personnel within the asylum procedure, including those certified by medical personnel working with NGOs.

- In June 2021, MSF released a major international report «Constructing Crisis at Europe's Borders», analysing five years of MSF's presence on the Aegean islands and tracing the legacy of the EU's harmful 'hotspot' approach. Based on extensive medical data and testimonies from

individuals on Lesbos, Chios and Samos, we showed how the island hotspots quickly transformed into mass containment sites, with people confined in degrading and inhumane conditions, triggering a mental health and protection crisis. MSF denounced the lack of adequate healthcare, fast-track asylum procedures, shocking living conditions and increased use of detention. MSF met with the European Union, member states and INGO/UN actors in Geneva, Brussels and Greece, to communicate our concerns directly. We also held press conferences across multiple European countries and shared MSF's interviews with international and Greek media.

- In July 2021, MSF raised the issue of inadequate protection and psychological support in Samos for the many people at active risk of suicide or self-harm. At the time, 67% of new MSF patients had thoughts of suicide or death, and the gaps in medical presence in Samos camp during evenings and weekends presented a serious risk.

- In August 2021, MSF briefed UN/ INGO, Greek and EU bodies on the concerning rate of gender-based violence on Samos and Lesbos, and the absence of safe alternative accommodation.

- In September 2021 MSF publicly denounced the inauguration of the new Closed Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) on Samos Island, challenging the narrative that the prison-like CCAC was an 'improvement' in living conditions

and raising concerns about moving highly vulnerable individuals into an isolated, securitised environment. MSF's main concerns were about deterioration of people's mental health in such containment conditions as well as the lack of access to appropriate healthcare.

- Through MSF's activities in Athens supporting asylum seekers, refugees and migrants to access vaccination against COVID-19, MSF identified the many administrative and bureaucratic barriers stopping people from getting vaccinated. MSF advocated to Greek authorities on ways to overcome these barriers and contributed into the drafting of legislation on the practical implementation of COVID-19 vaccination for migrants.

- In 2021, MSF continued to support the activities of Survivors, a survivor-led advocacy group of former patients of the MSF Victims of Torture (VoT) rehabilitation clinic in Athens. The group has been expanded to include other members of the refugee and migrant community. In 2021, the group collaborated with MSF to develop statements on the impact of the containment on the Greek islands, recognition and access to care for survivors of torture in Greece, and the impact of homelessness on survivors in Athens. The group made several interventions in high level meetings, at European parliaments and community fora, as well engaged in several public communication initiatives.



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