

HELLENIC REPUBLIC
GREEK NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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GNCHR Statement on the fire in Moria and the day after

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The Greek National Commission for Human Rights (GNCHR), as the National Human Rights Institution in Greece attaches the utmost importance to the protection of the rights of all those living in Greece, regardless of their status of residence. The GNCHR closely monitors the situation at the border and has drawn the State's attention to serious human rights violations occurring that threaten fragile social peace. **The fire in Moria occurred as part of an escalating violent upheaval, a situation which has been recorded by the GNCHR since 2018,¹ due to the suffocating conditions in Reception and Identification Centers (RICs) of the Eastern Aegean islands, as a result of European and national entrapment policies for newly arriving migrants at external EU borders in conjunction with the prolonged asylum procedures, undignified living conditions and the lack of integration policies for the day after.**

The outbreak of fire at the Moria RIC put in danger 12,767 lives and thousands of people – among them many children and persons with chronic diseases - are left without shelter, food or water. Considering the overcrowding as well as the aggravated conditions in the area because of the confirmed corona virus cases and the difficult weather conditions, the GNCHR is mindful of the best interests of all residents in Lesbos and **calls on the Greek State to immediately take all necessary measures to secure a decent accommodation, basic necessities and the provision of health care to the thousands of asylum seekers who remain trapped in Lesbos².** In this regard, the GNCHR monitors the management of the state of emergency by the Greek State and the actions taken for a safe and timely transfer of all

* This Statement was adopted by the Plenary of the GNCHR on 11.9.2020. Rapporteurs: Prof. M. Gavouneli, President, GNCHR and E. Tzavala, Legal Officer, GNCHR.

¹ GNCHR **Statement**: The GNCHR expresses its deep concerns about the situation in the Reception Centers of the Eastern Aegean islands and, especially of Moria in Lesbos (2018).

² See also **Joint statement** of 31 NGOs regarding the fire at the Registration and Identification Centre at Moria, 9.9.2020

unaccompanied minors to mainland as well as for a temporary solution of their housing issue in cooperation with the EU and international organizations.

The GNCHR has repeatedly pointed out the need for **an immediate termination of the geographical limitation imposed on the applicants for international protection in the Eastern Aegean islands, by transferring them to mainland, in appropriate long-term accommodation facilities and ensuring a minimum decent standard of living. The entrapment policy towards applicants for international protection in the Eastern Aegean islands is a no way out and their *de facto* detention in closed reception centers does not constitute a sustainable solution.**

Special care should be taken with those, who have been diagnosed with covid-19, for whom effective access to healthcare is of paramount importance to safeguarding their right to life. **Any measures taken should consider the protection of health and safety of both host refugee population and the islanders. In cases of emergency, common sense and respect for human rights must prevail without any fear and exclusion rhetoric.**

The GNCHR concurs with the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe,³ who underlines that “Greece needs concrete and substantial steps to be taken from other Council of Europe member states [...] Greece and its partners must fix the structural problems of a migratory policy that has caused so much unnecessary human suffering”. **Now is the time for the EU partners to demonstrate their concrete solidarity towards Greece.** The timing of the destruction of Europe's largest refugee camp coincides with the launch of new developments in the common European immigration and asylum policy, as preparations for the launch of the new Immigration and Asylum Pact are under way. Therefore, the GNCHR **calls on the European Union to turn the Moria disaster into an opportunity for a new European asylum and migration policy, a comprehensive deal for a proportional distribution of international protection applicants among Member States with a view to preserving European values and the fundamental rights *acquis* of Europe. No more Moria camps.**

³ Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, **Statement:** Commissioner calls on the Greek authorities to provide adequate support to all those affected by the fire in Moria, 9.9.2020.