





REFUGEE RIGHTS
EUROPE

SEEKING SANCTUARY

A SUMMARY REPORT HIGHLIGHTING THE SITUATION FOR SYRIAN REFUGEES IN EUROPE







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INTRODUCTION

Since the violence and conflict broke out in Syria during 2011, an estimated 13.5 million Syrian people are now in need, with 6.6 million internally displaced at the time of writing.[3]

No country has seen the displacement of such a large proportion of its population in recent decades[2], with the numbers continuing to increase every day. Whilst more than five million displaced Syrians now live in the neighbouring countries including Turkey (3.4 million), Lebanon (one million), Jordan (660,000), and Iraq (250,000); only one million have arrived in Europe since the war began.[3]

ONLY ONE MILLION (DISPLACED SYRIANS) HAVE ARRIVED IN EUROPE SINCE THE WAR BEGAN.

Within Europe, Syrian asylum-seekers have filed more asylum applications than people of any other nationalities during recent years, and have also had the highest share of approved applications (80% between 2015 and 2016). Germany has taken the lead among European countries by accepting 500,000 Syrian asylum applicants, making this the fifth-largest population of displaced Syrian people in the world.[4] In Germany, Syrians make up the biggest proportion of asylum applicants, with 3,634 applications made in July 2018. During 2018, the number of Syrian asylum applications lowered to 26,095 initial applications (down from 28,074 in 2017).[5]

GERMANY HAS TAKEN THE LEAD AMONG EUROPEAN COUNTRIES BY ACCEPTING 500,000 SYRIAN ASYLUM APPLICANTS.

Within Europe, Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees often find themselves facing very challenging circumstances. These include the containment policies and border-closures that prevent them from reuniting with their family members; as well as the prolonged waiting times for the outcomes of asylum applications. Many are also faced with difficulties in accessing education, adequate accommodation and other services. This report aims to provide an insight into the circumstances and experiences of Syrian refugees in Europe. It focuses specifically on human rights infringements, thus identifying a number of shortcomings in the European refugee relief response, leading to a number of policy recommendations.

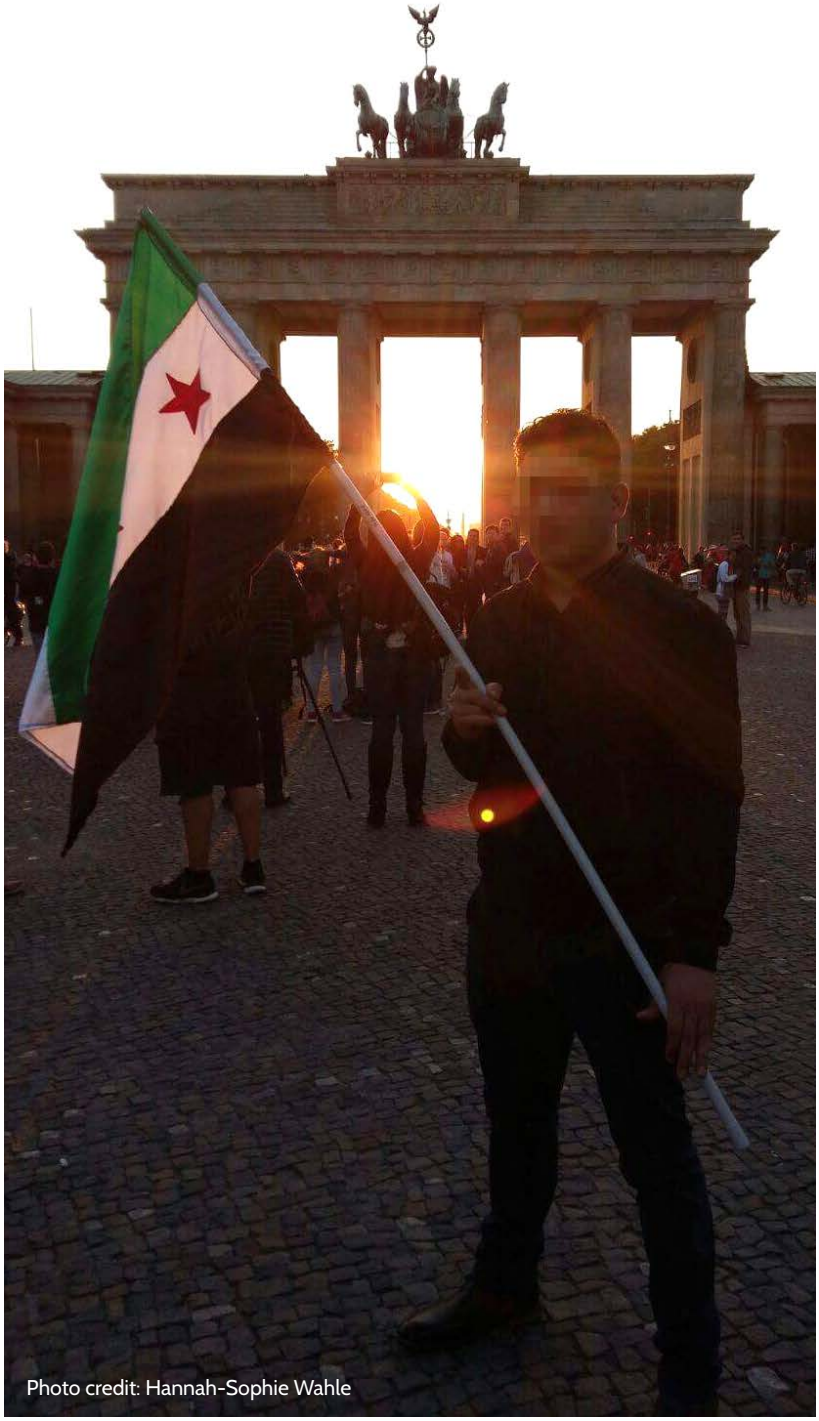


Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

1. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/; https://reliefweb.int/report/world/after-record-migration-80-syrian-asylum-applicants-approved-stay-europe; https://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html?query=syria
2. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/; https://reliefweb.int/report/world/after-record-migration-80-syrian-asylum-applicants-approved-stay-europe
3. https://reliefweb.int/report/world/after-record-migration-80-syrian-asylum-applicants-approved-stay-europe; http://syrianrefugees.eu/
4. http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/01/29/where-displaced-syrians-have-resettled/
5. http://www.bamf.de/DE/Infothek/Statistiken/Asylzahlen/AktuelleZahlen/aktuelle-zahlen-asyl-node.html

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The research presented in this report is a non-exhaustive summary of the key findings from four field research studies in five countries conducted by Refugee Rights Europe (RRE) during the period of 2017-2018.

These studies were carried out in mainland Greece (November 2016); Berlin, Germany (Dec 2016-Jan 2017); Chios (May 2017); and Lesvos (May 2018).[6] Throughout these research studies we have interviewed a total of 581 Syrian people, 183 of whom were women. Thirty-one of the total number of interviewees were minors under the age of 18.

WE HAVE INTERVIEWED A TOTAL OF 581 SYRIAN PEOPLE, 183 OF WHOM WERE WOMEN.

This report outlines country-disaggregated data from field research efforts across Europe to highlight the situation faced by Syrian refugees. It moreover consists of desk research conducted by the RRE team, and uses qualitative discussions with Syrian refugees who are currently living in the United Kingdom who helped to inform this report during the spring and summer of 2018.

The majority of the surveys and interviews carried out by Refugee Rights Europe were conducted in the respondents' native languages through semi-structured interviews, by researchers who have been trained by RRE and are independent of any other organisation or interest; several of whom are Syrian nationals living in Europe as refugees themselves.

Our studies are guided by ethical checklists that are underpinned by data protection policies, child safeguarding policies and a robust risk register to ensure the security and dignity of all participants. Researchers were expected to observe strict adherence to all Refugee Rights Europe's data protection policies, referral policies, child safeguarding and principles of full and informed consent.

Wherever possible, RRE adopts a methodology of random selection - using stratification and continuously monitoring the breakdown of demographic groups within the sample throughout its research studies, to ensure that the final data is reasonably representative of each given context. However, given the volatility and instability of many of the contexts in which we have worked it has sometimes been necessary for us to be flexible in our approach. As a result, selection bias cannot always be avoided, and we are not always able to steer the sample and stratification as much as we would ideally have liked.

Additional data has been drawn from observations made by our research team, as well as from informal interviews with charities and NGO staff, and has been used to complement interviews conducted with the displaced people themselves. We believe that our research findings provide crucial insights into what continues to constitute a blind spot in the eyes of decision-makers as well as the public: the unacceptable lived realities and human rights violations experienced by refugees and displaced people in Europe.

THE RESEARCH ENABLES RRE TO FORMULATE A NUMBER OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REFUGEE RELIEF RESPONSE IN EUROPE, WHICH ARE FOUND IN THE FINAL SECTION OF THIS REPORT.

This report places its emphasis upon six specific areas: living conditions, police and citizen violence, children in displacement, women in displacement, health and access to medical care, as well as access to information and education. As such, the report demonstrates the extent to which the different human rights infringements are affecting Syrian refugees in Europe, based on their own accounts. The research enables RRE to formulate a number of policy recommendations for the refugee relief response in Europe, which are found in the final section of this report.

This brief report is not designed to provide in-depth accounts or a detailed analysis of the experience of Syrian refugees in Europe, including the wide-ranging examples of positive contributions that many people have made within their new host communities. Those interested in reading more extensive research efforts may wish to refer to research conducted by organisations such as Young Republic[7] and the Danish Refugee Council[8].



Photo credit: Claire Veale

6. www.RefugeeRights.org.uk/Reports
7. http://theyoungrepublic.org/what-we-do/research/
8. https://drc.ngo/media/4167496/drc-diaspora-programme_study_syrian-diaspora-groups-in-europe_web.pdf

*Refugee Rights Europe relays the voices of displaced people in Europe, reporting what respondents tell us. As such, we have not been able to verify claims through official sources. Throughout the report, wording such as "30% had experienced police violence" means that 30% of respondents said they had experienced police violence, although such claims have not been possible to verify.

LIVING CONDITIONS

Across Europe, despite the availability of resources, basic levels of subsistence, water and food were not sufficiently available to a large portion of our respondents. In fact, the living conditions facing many Syrian asylum-seekers and refugees in Europe have been questionable to say the least.

CONDITIONS IN THE CAMPS ARE FAILING TO MEET INTERNATIONALLY EXPECTED STANDARDS WITHIN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS.

Many Syrians remain trapped on the Greek islands in the Aegean Sea, as they arrive in Europe via Turkey. As part of the EU-Turkey Statement of March 2016, the Greek government has introduced the 'containment policy,' which is a geographical restriction whereby new arrivals are banned from travelling to mainland Greece until their asylum claims have been processed.[9] As a result of this containment policy, the situation on the islands has seen a rapid deterioration. Conditions in the camps are failing to meet internationally expected standards within humanitarian contexts, with widespread overcrowding, failing sanitation services and large numbers of people affected by both mental and physical health problems. There are regular reports of refugees dying on the islands, either due to the lack of access to appropriate medical care or from suicide.[10]

THERE ARE REGULAR REPORTS OF REFUGEES DYING ON THE ISLANDS, EITHER DUE TO THE LACK OF ACCESS TO APPROPRIATE MEDICAL CARE OR FROM SUICIDE.

The length of time spent on the islands as a result of both the containment policy and the slow processing of asylum applications means that individuals are being forced to remain in these potentially harmful environments. The process by which vulnerability assessments are carried out does not appear to be streamlined or transparent, and the centres remain understaffed. This serves to further increase states of vulnerability and leads to the deterioration of mental and physical health due to the desperate conditions on the islands, which are in turn likely to exacerbate the trauma that most people have already suffered during their journey. In addition, the squalid conditions and extended time periods in which people remain trapped on the islands have led to an increase in tensions arising amongst displaced people, as well as with local residents,[11] demonstrating that the current approach is wholly untenable and is in need of urgent change.

International non-governmental organisation Save the Children has similarly reported slow asylum processes in Greece, which results in people being stuck on the islands indefinitely in overcrowded areas characterised by water shortages, poor sanitation and rodent and insect-infested living areas.[12] This resonates with RRE's research, which highlighted the sanitation issues affecting displaced people on the islands of Chios and Lesvos.

THE SQUALID CONDITIONS AND EXTENDED TIME PERIODS IN WHICH PEOPLE REMAIN TRAPPED ON THE ISLANDS HAVE LED TO AN INCREASE IN TENSIONS ARISING AMONGST DISPLACED PEOPLE, AS WELL AS WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS.

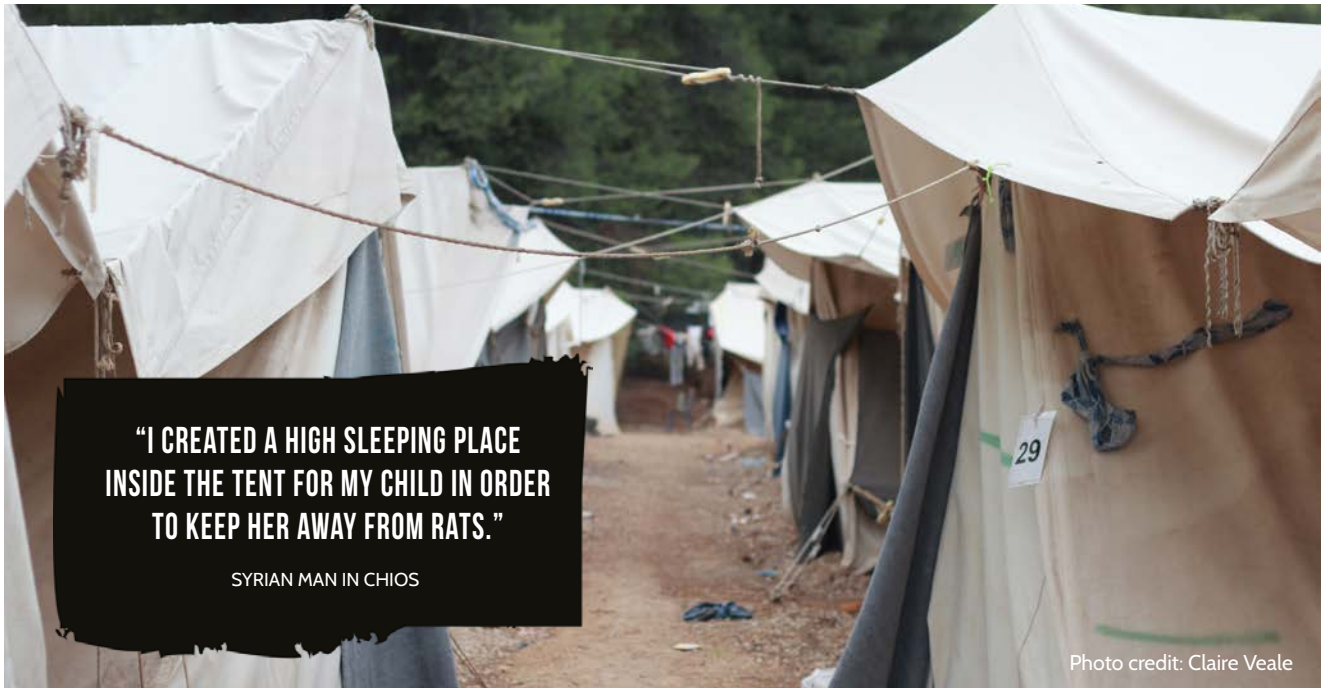


Photo credit: Claire Veale

9. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/11/rights-groups-urge-greece-containment-policy-171122204019045.html
10. http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/RRDP_AnIslandAtBreakingPoint.pdf
11. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/world/europe/greece-lesbos-refugees.html
12. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/10/refugees-greece-feel-prisoners-hostages-171001064707203.html



Photo credit: Claire Veale

To illustrate the severity of the situation, a Syrian man recounted how he had taken desperate measures to protect his child from being bitten by the rats: *"I created a high sleeping place inside the tent for my child in order to keep her away from rats."* Another Syrian refugee in Chios told us, *"When I arrived in November last year, I slept in the streets for two weeks until I found a place to sleep inside the camp."* In Lesvos, a Syrian man expressed his disbelief at the situation there: *"We fled to secure our lives, but we didn't reach any stability, the situation is even worse. What we are experiencing here, we never experienced it back in Syria."* Meanwhile, an elderly Syrian woman said: *"For three days I have not been able to get drinkable water that is distributed."*

"I SLEPT IN THE STREETS FOR TWO WEEKS"

SYRIAN REFUGEE IN CHIOS

IN MAINLAND GREECE

28.9%

WERE COMPLETELY UNSATISFIED WITH THEIR LIVING CONDITIONS

In fact, there are hundreds of people waiting for water distributions, so sometimes the water does indeed run out because the supply cannot meet demand. In mainland Greece, conditions are similarly problematic in many camps across the country. When interviewing Syrians in mainland Greece in November 2016, RRE found that 28.9% were completely unsatisfied with their living conditions, 20.3% were very unsatisfied and 26.6% reported being quite unsatisfied, illustrating clear shortcomings in the refugee response.

IN BERLIN, GERMANY

45.8%

OF WOMEN RESPONDENTS HAD EXPERIENCED HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THEIR ASYLUM ACCOMODATION OR REFUGEE CAMP

Among Syrian refugees in the urban context of Berlin, Germany, living conditions tend to be significantly better than on the Greek mainland and the islands. Although the majority of respondents here lived in warm and secure housing, RRE found that 40.1% overall and 45.8% of women respondents had experienced health problems in their asylum accommodation or refugee camp. 17.9% of those described their medical treatment as 'poor' or 'very poor.' 29.4% believed that their health issue was triggered by the unhealthy environment in the camp and 9.2% believed the source was a disease spread within the camp. The research moreover identified a number of alarming cases where accommodation was lacking altogether. One respondent told researchers that he did not have a place to live, so he was sleeping in a café.

"FOR THREE DAYS I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO GET DRINKABLE WATER THAT IS DISTRIBUTED."

ELDERLY SYRIAN WOMAN IN LESVOS

IN BERLIN GERMANY

17.9%

OF THOSE WITH A MEDICAL ISSUE DESCRIBED THEIR MEDICAL TREATMENT AS 'POOR' OR 'VERY POOR'

POLICE AND CITIZEN VIOLENCE

CITIZEN VIOLENCE

Violence, including racially motivated violence perpetrated by members of the public, was reported across RRE's research locations in Europe, highlighting the urgent need to mitigate tensions between local populations and displaced communities.

The rising anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe has indeed resulted in increasing tensions and conflicts between locals and migrants within the Greek islands as well as on the mainland. Greek police have reported an increase in hate crimes across the country.[13] Statistics were released by the German interior ministry in February 2016 demonstrating that there were nearly 10 attacks per day targeted towards migrants and refugees. [14] At the Swiss, Austrian and French borders, refugees and asylum-seekers continue to face violence.[15]

27% of respondents in Lesvos (14% of Syrians) said they had experienced citizen violence, including an attack by a far-right group in the centre of Mytilene. Moreover, the extreme shortage of resources and severe overcrowding in the camps on Lesvos serve to heighten tensions among displaced persons, 47% of whom had experienced violence from other refugees. In Chios, 17% of Syrians reported having experienced verbal and/or physical forms of citizen violence.

IN LESVOS

14%

OF SYRIANS SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED CITIZEN VIOLENCE

Meanwhile, during RRE's study in Berlin, Germany, the majority of respondents said they felt 'welcome' to live as part of German society, with 24.2% reporting feeling 'very welcome', and 33.25% 'welcome'. However, 33.8% said that they feel 'so-so'. Only 8.8% of all respondents said they feel 'not welcome' or 'not welcome at all'. The research indicated that racism and attacks by neo-Nazi individuals and groups were one barrier to successful integration. 2016 figures released by the interior minister of Germany show that there were more than 3,500 attacks against refugees in 2016.[16] However, in Berlin, RRE's research found that the vast majority (82.9%) of all respondents had never experienced violence by German citizens. This figure is roughly the same amongst women (82.7%) and respondents from different country groups.

THE RESEARCH INDICATED THAT RACISM AND ATTACKS BY NEO-NAZI INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS WERE ONE BARRIER TO SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION.

IN BERLIN, GERMANY

84.6%

OF THOSE WHO HAD EXPERIENCED CITIZEN VIOLENCE DESCRIBED IT AS VERBAL ABUSE

Amongst those who had experienced citizen violence (17.1% of all respondents and 19% of Syrians), around one-fifth said this violence took a physical form. *"They hurt refugees, they hit them, they frighten the children,"* explained one respondent. *"One time they forced a guy to fall off his bike. When people call the police, they come late or do not come at all. One time they injured a guy in his leg. One time there was a guy in urgent need to be taken to a hospital, but we could not because the camp was surrounded by those bad citizens."* Other instances included spitting, pushing and even attacks by dogs. 84.6% described their ordeal as verbal abuse, including the fear of violence from right-wing groups who sometimes surrounded accommodation centres.

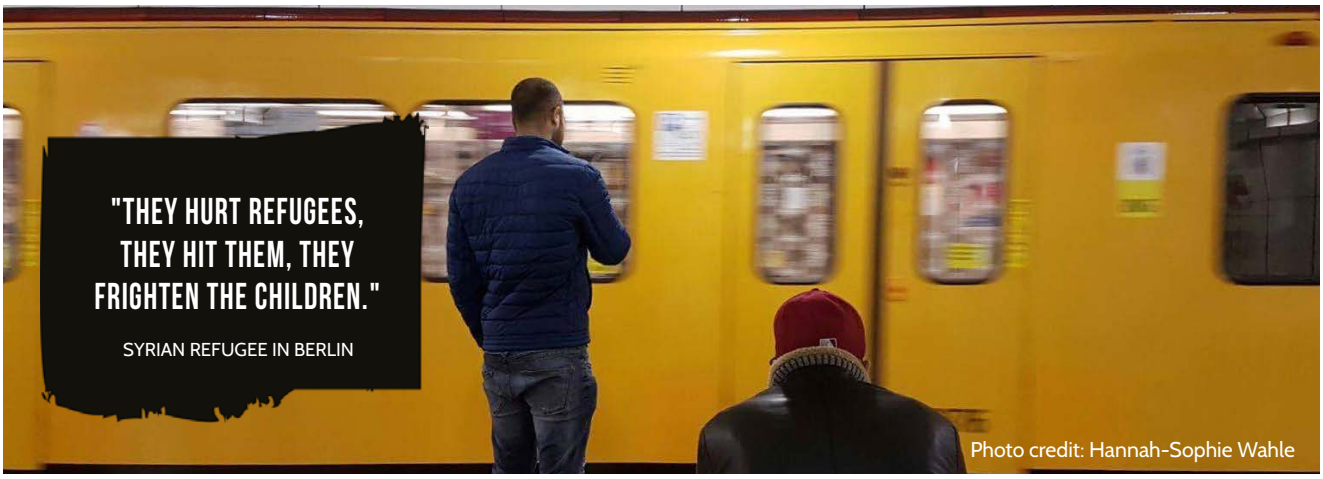


Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

13. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/24/world/europe/greece-lesbos-refugees.html
14. https://www.newsdeeply.com/syria/articles/2017/12/04/escaping-europe-why-some-syrian-refugees-have-chosen-to-leave
15. http://www.msf.org/en/article/out-sight-second-edition
16. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/02/attacks-day-refugees-shelters-2016-170226170920171.html



Reports of police violence were widespread in almost all locations visited by RRE. In Lesvos, close to half of all individuals interviewed (43% of Syrians) said that they had experienced police violence, with 85% of these allegedly having been exposed to tear gas – accounts that were indeed corroborated anecdotally by local aid organisations.

IN CHIOS
18%
OF SYRIANS SAID THEY HAD EXPERIENCED POLICE VIOLENCE

In Chios, 18% of Syrians said they had experienced police violence. One Syrian respondent recalled that he was detained for ten days, and then suddenly released after the authorities realised that he was not the person they were looking for. This man recounted being beaten and kicked in the face during detention, whilst also being prevented from going to the toilet and from smoking. Another Syrian man had spent six months in several detention centres in Chios and Athens, where he recounted being beaten several times. A Syrian refugee in Lesvos told us *"When I tried to smuggle myself by the ship, I was caught and was beaten, then I was taken to the police station."*

ONE MAN RECOUNTED BEING BEATEN AND KICKED IN THE FACE DURING DETENTION, WHILST ALSO BEING PREVENTED FROM GOING TO THE TOILET AND FROM SMOKING.

Meanwhile, only 9.8% of respondents (10.8% of women and 10% of Syrians) in Berlin had experienced this form of violence during their time in Germany. The level of violence experienced was fairly even across country groups. About one-quarter of respondents described general police treatment of refugees as 'very good', while 38.5% said it was 'good' and 25.9% 'OK'. Only 6.7% described police treatment of refugees as 'bad' or 'very bad'. 72.1% of respondents said they had never seen another refugee being hurt by officials, and only 5.6% said they had seen this occur 'often' or 'very often'. Meanwhile, 2.3% of respondents had been arrested during their time living in German camps.

IN BERLIN, GERMANY
10.8%
OF WOMEN HAD EXPERIENCED POLICE VIOLENCE DURING THEIR TIME IN GERMANY

A majority of 76.3% of people who had experienced police violence described this as verbal abuse. Some 21% had experienced physical violence, and alarmingly 7.9% reported experiencing sexual violence by police, military or security staff. It transpired from interviews that most of the violence was caused by security staff rather than the police. One respondent explained, *"police is good but I had a problem with security staff."*

HEALTH AND ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

A Red Cross study from 2017 highlights that one-in-three Syrian refugees suffers from depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder, which is three-times higher in comparison to the general population. According to the same study, the main challenge facing refugees in their new host countries is often accessing the appropriate healthcare treatment to address these issues. The Red Cross reported a number of barriers to accessing medical care: *"a lack of knowledge of the health care system and entitlements, language barriers, differing beliefs and expectations for health care, cultural stigma surrounding mental health, and a lack of trust in professionals and authorities".*

In addition to untreated physical ailments, the lack of adequate social and psycho-social services pose a risk to the mental health of refugees and asylum-seekers, placing them at greater risk of being unable to cope when integrating into European society. People tend to turn to alcohol and drugs, and in some cases violence and abuse if they are unable to receive the appropriate treatment.

IN LESVOS

87.3%

OF SYRIANS HAD EXPERIENCED HEALTH ISSUES ON THE ISLAND IN CHIOS

The poor and deteriorating mental health of the refugees on the Greek islands is apparent, with people including children having to witness regular suicide attempts amongst camp residents. In Lesvos, 87.3% of Syrians had experienced health issues and on the island of Chios, 73.6% of the Syrian respondents reported the same. 20.8% described the quality of medical care received as 'very poor' whilst 15.6% described it as 'poor'. In Chios, one middle-aged Syrian man told us *"I saw one person setting himself on fire, and maybe I'll be the next one. I feel so bad and depressed."* Another respondent coping with a serious mental ailment highlighted the highly problematic lack of support for mental ill-health: *"The psychiatrist gave me only five minutes, he said he cannot give him more time as there are others waiting."* In the absence of solid psychological support or psychiatrists in Chios, self-harm is commonplace. *"I tried several times to hurt myself by a blade but my friend prevented me"*, one person told us. A Kurdish man from Syria claimed, *"I did not sleep and eat anything since yesterday, just had a cigarette".*

IN LESVOS

20.8%

OF SYRIANS DESCRIBED THE QUALITY OF MEDICAL CARE RECEIVED AS 'VERY POOR'

Another Syrian man in Chios reported that he was experiencing chronic pain due to being tortured in Syria. However, rather than providing treatment, the doctor he saw simply concluded that he was fine, which led to the man losing his temper. Instead of seeking a solution to the chronic pain, the doctor called the police. One Syrian man explained that he had ruptured a ligament in his leg, but the doctor only gave him a painkiller tablet and refused to analyse the problem further. As a result, he is now unable to walk.



Photo credit: Mohamad Saoud

17. http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-determinants/migration-and-health/news/news/2017/04/migrant-populations,-including-children,-at-higher-risk-of-mental-health-disorders
18. https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/03/refugees-europe-facing-mental-health-crisis-170320103131018.html

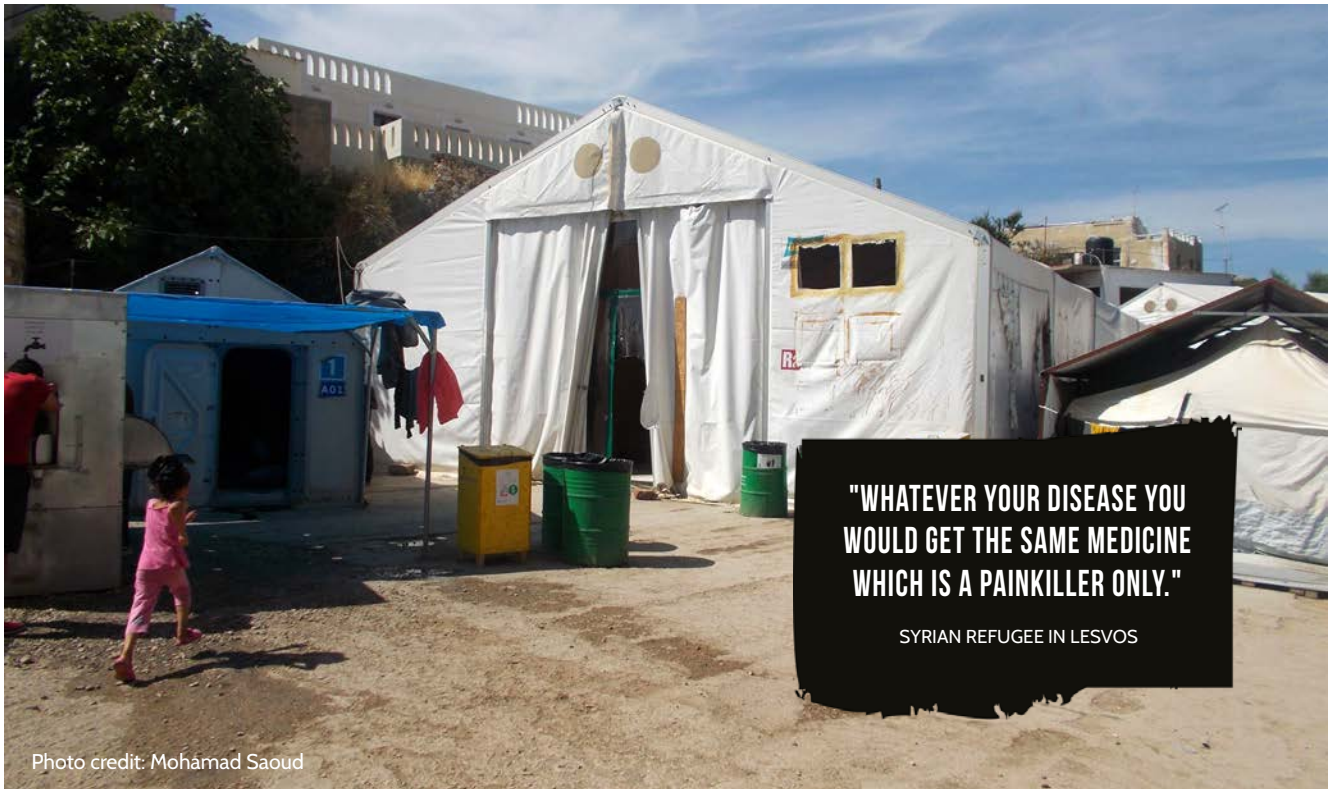


Photo credit: Mohamad Saoud

Whilst 72.1% of Syrians in mainland Greece had experienced health issues, 20.8% described the quality of medical care received as 'very poor,' with 15.6% describing it as 'poor'.

Meanwhile, in almost all research locations, the refugees interviewed raised strong concerns about the quality of the medical care they received. The appointments are rushed, and patients are usually only given simple painkillers and asked to drink plenty of water. This advice does not help with complicated medical matters. A refugee in Lesvos told us: *"whatever your disease you would get the same medicine which is a painkiller only."*

IN BERLIN, GERMANY

35%

OF SYRIANS HAD EXPERIENCED HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THEIR CAMPS

In the urban context of Berlin, Germany, 40.1% (45.8% of women and 35% of Syrians) had experienced health problems in their camps. Some 37.9% reported that they had suffered from a common health issue that could happen anywhere. Meanwhile, 29.4% believed that the problem had arisen due to the unhealthy living conditions within the camp, and 9.2% identified it as a disease that was spread inside the camp. 5.9% reported that the health issue was linked to pregnancy or sexual health. Describing the quality of the medical care received, 7.2% said it was 'very poor', while 13.3% described it as 'poor'.


Photo credit: Claire Veale

ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND INFORMATION

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

For the Syrian people who may spend extended periods of time in displacement within Europe, accessing adequate education is vital. Education is generally viewed as a gateway towards integration for refugees. However, there is a great disparity in education provision across RRE's research locations.

IN MAINLAND GREECE

69.9%

OF RESPONDENTS LACKED EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In Germany, only 33.3% of respondents lacked educational opportunities; however this figure rose to 69.9% in mainland Greece. This means that a massive proportion of children are being denied their right to education, which in turn could have huge repercussions upon future opportunities for the rest of their lives. In Lesvos, only 65.2% of child respondents said that they had access to educational opportunities in Lesvos. Greek law states that education is compulsory for all children between the ages of five and 15, including asylum seekers, even if they lack any formal papers.[19] They should have access to public education *"for so long as an expulsion measure against them or their parents is not actually enforced"*.[20]

GREEK LAW STATES THAT EDUCATION IS COMPULSORY FOR ALL CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF FIVE AND 15, INCLUDING ASYLUM SEEKERS, EVEN IF THEY LACK ANY FORMAL PAPERS.

The Greek government has indeed attempted to make schooling available to all refugee children, however the response by local schools has varied dramatically. The opportunity to attend school will provide children with some much-needed stability and routine; and is the first step towards gaining qualifications in the future. Schools can also provide a gateway towards interactions with members of the child's new host community and can help them to begin new friendships, although refugee children are more likely to encounter barriers to social integration, arising from prejudice, bullying or language difficulties. When children are enrolled in school, teachers should therefore treat them as individuals and respond accordingly to their specific needs.[21]

Women interviewed by RRE in mainland Greece reported that an unwelcoming environment had discouraged them from sending their children to school, contradicting the provision of the UN Declaration for education to 'promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations.' Other mothers cited the embarrassment of being unable to adequately clothe their children as the reason they did not attend school, with transportation issues also acting as a barrier to accessing education. 40% of women interviewed in Greece said that they did not feel safe sending their children to school.

IN MAINLAND GREECE

40%

OF WOMEN SAID THEY DID NOT FEEL SAFE SENDING THEIR CHILDREN TO SCHOOL



Photo credit: Claire Veale

19. https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/07/18/without-education-they-lose-their-future/denial-education-child-asylum-seekers#_ftn2
20. http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ddcfda14.html
21. https://ei-ie.org/en/woe_homepage/woe_detail/15744/%E2%80%9Cwhat-europe-can-do-for-refugees-and-migrants%E2%80%99-education%E2%80%9D-by-silvia-costa-mep; https://www.humanium.org/en/integration-of-refugee-children-into-education-systems-in-europe/



Photo credit: Mohamad Saoud

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT THE MAJORITY OF YOUNG SYRIAN REFUGEES AGED 18-32 IN THE UNITED KINGDOM ARE EITHER IN WORK OR ARE STUDYING.

However, analysis of the situation within new host countries tends to show a positive trend among resettled Syrian refugees. Research has shown that the majority of young Syrian refugees aged 18-32 in the United Kingdom are either in work or are studying, discrediting the myth that Syrians were taking advantage of social welfare provision and reluctant to work. The study was carried out among the 7,300 Syrian refugees who have resettled in the UK since 2015, and demonstrated that one-in-four young Syrians had jobs and over one-third were students. Those who were currently unemployed and searching for a job reported that their main obstacle in accessing the labour market was the language barrier.[22]

A report released by the Danish Refugee Council similarly highlights invaluable work undertaken by Syrian diaspora in promoting the integration of Syrian newcomers in Europe, in order to prevent the loss of skills amongst Syrians in displacement and to prevent frustration and disillusion.[23] The same report suggests that *"human capital development of displaced Syrians, through the promotion of education, professional training and labour market integration, can help to build a firm basis of skills, that can be applied to the reconstruction of Syria once the violent conflict has come to an end, either through return or transnational practices of the diaspora".* [24]



Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

22. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/syria-refugees-crisis-uk-immigration-work-studying-research-latest-updates-a8299256.html
23. https://drc.ngo/media/4167496/drc-diaspora-programme_study_syrian-diaspora-groups-in-europe_web.pdf, p. 66
24. https://drc.ngo/media/4167496/drc-diaspora-programme_study_syrian-diaspora-groups-in-europe_web.pdf, p. 66

Lack of access to information about their rights, opportunities, and available services proved a pervasive problem for refugees and displaced persons across research locations, exacerbating their precarious living situations and any physical and mental health problems.

IN CHIOS

85%

OF SYRIANS SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In Chios, 85% of Syrians said they did not have access to information regarding their legal rights and opportunities to change their situation. 79% of Syrians there similarly reported that they did not have any information on European asylum law and immigration rules. In Chios, many respondents were under the impression that no-one is able, or willing, to share any concrete information about the status of asylum cases, or the likelihood of being transferred to the mainland. Many Syrian

MANY SYRIAN RESPONDENTS REPORTED THAT THEY WERE NOT PROVIDED WITH DETAILED REASONS WHY THEIR APPLICATIONS WERE REJECTED

respondents reported that they were not provided with detailed reasons why their applications were rejected - instead having been handed papers stating that Turkey will protect them. This makes lodging an appeal extremely difficult, because the grounds for rejection remain unclear. One respondent from Syria, who was injured during the war and now suffers from a chronic back issue which has left him unable to walk, told RRE's researchers that there was a power cut immediately after he finished his asylum interview. The interviewers told him that everything was fine, but he is doubtful as he is the only one from his cohort still waiting to be called for a second interview. He has tried to follow up with the administrators but is constantly sent away and told to wait.

In Lesvos, there was a similarly alarming lack of information among asylum-seekers. 83% of Syrians interviewed by RRE said that they did not have

IN LESVOS

83%

OF SYRIANS SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

information about their legal rights and opportunities to alter their situation, while 78% said they did not have sufficient information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Refugees on the islands appear to be losing hope due to the lack of information and communication from the authorities, with one young Syrian man on the island of Chios telling us *"I have been here since April 2016 and I am ready to wait for two, three years, but all I need to know is when I will be transferred from here. I have no idea, I am just waiting hopelessly."* Another respondent, who had spent five years in Syrian regime prisons and demonstrated PTSD and torture symptoms, explained that he is trying to join his wife and daughter in Germany. He claimed that he has all the required documents to prove his situation, but the office is too crowded and he had thus far been unable to process his case.



"I HAVE BEEN HERE SINCE APRIL 2016 AND I AM READY TO WAIT FOR TWO, THREE YEARS, BUT ALL I NEED TO KNOW IS WHEN I WILL BE TRANSFERRED FROM HERE."

SYRIAN MAN IN CHIOS

Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

25. Refugee Rights Europe (2017) 'An Island at Breaking Point'
26. Refugee Rights Europe (2016) 'Life in Limbo'



Photo credit: Hannah-Sophie Wahle

In mainland Greece, 75% of Syrian respondents said that they did not have access to information about their rights and opportunities to change their situation. 64% lacked access to information about European asylum law and immigration rules. Due to the slow asylum process in Greece, some refugees attempt to take matters into their own hands. For instance, a Syrian man explained, *"Two months ago, a group of eight of us tried to escape to Serbia. We were on foot for about 20 hours and eventually broke down from hunger. We were so desperate we finally found a dog and ate it. We then got caught and returned a few hours later."*

IN MAINLAND GREECE

75%

OF SYRIANS SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

REFUGEES ARE ENTITLED TO BRING THEIR NUCLEAR FAMILY MEMBERS TO WHERE THEY RESIDE.

The process of family reunification is also slow and complicated in Greece as well as in other European countries. Refugees are entitled to bring their nuclear family members to where they reside, however the lack of support, both legal and financial, serves to delay the process. This puts the family members at risk and the forced separation can be detrimental for all family members, especially children and single mothers. A number of respondents cited separation from family as being a key factor affecting their level of satisfaction in Berlin, Germany, explaining that this can affect their ability to study, work and start building a new life. One Syrian respondent told our researchers that the staff at the foreigners' registration office had been dismissive when he enquired about the possibility of bringing his wife from Lebanon. The staff reportedly responded: *"I would never have left my wife alone in the first place if I was in your situation. But maybe you had your own motives."* This also demonstrates a lack of understanding regarding the nature of family separation amongst the officials.

On the island of Chios, RRE interviewed a young Syrian man who at the time of the interview had been there for over a year. He told us *"Sometimes I sit alone and cry. All my friends who came with me left"*. The situation on the islands is the same for all refugees, who have very slim chances of being relocated to the mainland. Refugees live in crowded, unhygienic camps with no hope of moving forwards and no information about how long it might take for their applications to be accepted.

In Germany, 79.3% of all respondents (53% of Syrians) lacked access to advice about their rights and any opportunities available to change their situation. 59% of Syrians in Berlin said that they did not have access to sufficient information about European asylum law and immigration rules.

IN BERLIN, GERMANY

59%

OF SYRIANS SAID THEY DID NOT HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR LEGAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The general trend across the research by RRE is that refugees have very limited information available to them which means that they have limited power to alter their position. This lack of access to education and information about their rights or European asylum law is perhaps particularly worrying for women and children, many of whom are unable to improve their situation and are at a heightened risk of human trafficking and sexual exploitation. For the thousands of people in displacement currently waiting in limbo in Europe, having so little access to essential information is likely to have an adverse effect on their mental health and leave them feeling that they have little to no hope of creating a better life.

SYRIAN WOMEN IN DISPLACEMENT

In general, women in displacement face specific challenges in their journey to Europe. Gender-based violence (sexual, physical, and emotional) and trafficking tend to increase in situations of war, particularly due to the lack of privacy throughout the journey. Sexual and reproductive healthcare for displaced women tends to vary according to location. This can further exacerbate the trauma that many women may experience, such as the absence of adequate prenatal care, giving birth without appropriate medical attendance, understaffed hospitals performing medical procedures without appropriate consent and partners being banned from attending the birth.[27]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND TRAFFICKING TEND TO INCREASE IN SITUATIONS OF WAR, PARTICULARLY DUE TO THE LACK OF PRIVACY THROUGHOUT THE JOURNEY.

IN LESVOS

52.2%

OF SYRIAN WOMEN SAID THEY 'NEVER FEEL SAFE' THERE

RRE's research throughout 2016-2018 has highlighted the unacceptable lack of specific safeguarding measures to protect displaced women and girls in Europe. 52.2% of Syrian refugee women in Lesvos said they never feel safe there, 34.7% don't feel safe at all and only 4.3% said that they feel perfectly safe. 21.7% had experienced violence by other refugees in Lesvos. Our research highlighted the acute vulnerability of pregnant women living on the island, including one woman's deeply disturbing account of suffering a miscarriage during early pregnancy due to the effects of tear gas, which had been discharged into the camp by police during an altercation. RRE identified the lack of specific security measures and gender-sensitive camp design in Lesvos and Chios, a concern repeatedly voiced by human rights groups and humanitarian organisations.[28] 16.2% of women interviewed in mainland Greece reported having experienced violence along the journey.

The average age of the women interviewed in Lesvos, Greece was 31 years, with one girl being under the age of 17 and the oldest woman aged 60. 70.4% were aged 18 to 35. The majority of 42.6% were from Syria. 11% of women reported being alone in Lesvos. When interviewing Syrian refugee women in Lesvos, RRE enquired whether they had experienced any health problems since their arrival, with 91.3% reporting that they had. Only 13% of these had received medical care for their problem (most said that the doctors were not helpful). 61.9% believe that their health issue started because of the unhealthy environment in the camp.

IN MAINLAND GREECE

51.4%

OF WOMEN WERE EXPERIENCING HEALTH CONCERNS, AND 18.9% WERE PREGNANT

During its study in mainland Greece, RRE found that 51.4% of women interviewed were experiencing health concerns, and 18.9% were pregnant. 16.2% did not know where to access medical services for pregnancy and 56.8% did not know where women could access contraception if they wanted to. When describing the quality of medical care received, 18.9% of women said it was 'poor', 24.3% described it as 'very poor' and another 24.3% said that it was 'OK'.



Photo credit: Claire Veale

27. https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/media/k2/attachments/CARE-March4Women-refugee-advocacy-brief_Feb-2017.pdf
28. Human Rights Watch, December 2017. See: https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/15/greece-dire-risks-women-asylum-seekers; UNHCR, February 2018. See: http://www.unhcr.org/5a7d67c4b?utm_source=PR_COMMS&utm_medium=email&utm_content=UNHCR%20Communication%20Service&utm_campaign=HQ_EN_BriefingNotes_171027


Photo credit: Mohamad Saoud

REFUGEES ARE REQUIRED TO ADAPT TO A NEW CULTURE WHILST SIMULTANEOUSLY REBUILDING THEIR IDENTITIES AND FORGING NEW LIVES.

Furthermore, in host countries, identity and integration create specific challenges. Refugees are required to adapt to a new culture whilst simultaneously rebuilding their identities and forging new lives. In many parts of Syria, traditional patriarchal structures are part of the culture, and it is important to consider the relevance of this background for women in displacement. In order to preserve their cultures, these values tend to be reinforced and strongly upheld when moving to host countries where the norms and values may be very different. This can lead to social isolation, including the obligation to stay at home for childcare duties and a lack of knowledge about the possibilities for self-determination and empowerment. Elderly women in displacement often find it more difficult to adapt to new countries compared to younger generations. They report having difficulty in picking up the language, which can result in a higher risk of social isolation and fewer opportunities of making new contacts in a different environment.[29]

IN LESVOS

78%

OF WOMEN SAID THEY HAD FAMILY MEMBERS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

Among the women in Lesvos, 87% said that they did not have access to information about their legal rights and about opportunities to change their situation. Meanwhile, 78% said they had family members and/or relatives elsewhere in Europe. 13% of women had been waiting on the island for more than six months, which puts them in a very vulnerable position given the conditions and the lack of safety on the island.

29. http://www.friedenskreis-syrien.de/uploads/1508785683-Syrian%20Women%20during%20their%20flight%20and%20in%20Germany_FKS.pdf

SYRIAN CHILDREN IN DISPLACEMENT

Amongst 13.5 Syrian people in need, six million are children.[30] Children are an especially vulnerable group who face a myriad of risks during displacement. Article 22 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child requires states to take appropriate measures to ensure that children seeking or holding refugee status, whether accompanied or not, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance. However, such measures were largely lacking across research locations, leaving children in extremely dangerous environments.

CHILDREN ARE AN ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE GROUP WHO FACE A MYRIAD OF RISKS DURING DISPLACEMENT.

Many of the Syrian children trapped on the Greek islands would typically spend a significant part of their psychologically formative years in precarious and violent conditions. 44% of the minors whom we interviewed were reportedly travelling alone and were therefore highly vulnerable, with 78% informing us that they 'never feel safe'.

ON THE GREEK ISLANDS

44%

OF CHILDREN WERE REPORTEDLY TRAVELLING ALONE

Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that states must recognise the child's right to the 'enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health' and must ensure that no child is deprived of their right to access appropriate healthcare services. However, a large proportion of children interviewed by RRE in Europe were experiencing health problems, which often went untreated. 74% of children had suffered from a health problem whilst in Lesvos, the majority attributing this to the unhealthy living conditions. 24% of children in Lesvos described their problem as a mental health issue yet 41% had reportedly not received any medical treatment.

In Lesvos, there is growing concern that not all children are given a full asylum interview and appropriate age assessment, despite Greek law demanding a full assessment procedure upon interception on Greek territory.[31] Instead, children are reportedly assessed within five minutes based on their size and 'how old they look'. Moreover, due to a lack of accommodation, some minors assessed as underage are still forced to sleep on the street. This contravenes United Nations Guidelines, which prescribe that children found to be underage must promptly be referred to childcare facilities, accommodation centres for minors and other appropriate services.[32]

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN IS UNACCEPTABLE IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES, HOWEVER THIS WAS PREVALENT IN MOST OF RRE'S RESEARCH LOCATIONS.

Violence against children is unacceptable in all circumstances, however this was prevalent in most of RRE's research locations. 26% of minors in Lesvos said that they had been arrested or detained in Greece.

The lack of information that is available to minors compounds the dangerous situations that they face and prolongs the time that they spend living on the streets; exposed to exploitation, trafficking and other dangers. In Lesvos, 52% of the minors interviewed did not have access to information about their rights and a similar figure lacked access to information about European asylum rules. This is particularly alarming, given the number of minors who reportedly had family members in Europe and may therefore be eligible for family reunification.



Photo credit: Claire Veale

30. https://www.unhcr.org/uk/syria-emergency.html?query=syria; https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/protecting_syrian_children_en_route_to_europe_feb_2017.pdf
31. Council of Europe, September 2017. See: https://rm.coe.int/age-assessment-council-of-europe-member-states-policies-procedures-and/168074b723
32. UNICEF, January 2013. See: http://www.refworld.org/docid/5130659f2.html



Photo credit: Claire Veale

Meanwhile, respondents in Berlin, Germany, highlighted the absence of separate facilities for families and single people, leading to concerns about inadequate protection for women and children. *"There is no real checking,"* said one respondent. *"Guys and families live together, and there are many different nationalities".*

"GUYS AND FAMILIES LIVE TOGETHER, AND THERE ARE MANY DIFFERENT NATIONALITIES"

ANONYMOUS

SAVE THE CHILDREN HAS IDENTIFIED NUMEROUS PROTECTION ISSUES REGARDING CHILDREN IN A RECENT REPORT PUBLISHED IN 2017.

Conditions in host countries are continuing to deteriorate due to increasing demands coupled with limited resources and funding, with women and children bearing the brunt of this effect. Save The Children has identified numerous protection issues regarding children in a recent report published in 2017, including: inadequate services for basic needs, a lack of sleeping quarters on the journey, familial separation, no specific private showers for women and girls, the risk of exploitation and trafficking, short transit times between destinations making it difficult for organisations to provide appropriate support and follow-up and the lack of adolescent-friendly spaces. This has meant that some young people have to share common spaces with adults.

The treacherous journey to Europe can have serious and long-term effects on the mental health of children in displacement, many of whom who have faced the very real risk of death and family separation every day of their journey.[33] RRE interviewed a 19-year-old Syrian boy in London who had endured a difficult journey to reach the UK. He was in Calais, France for seven months, before arriving in the UK at the age of 17. Having to witness people falling off the boat on the journey between Turkey and Greece has left him feeling traumatised. He told us *"I thought I am going to die. I had never been that scared in my life."*

THE TREACHEROUS JOURNEY TO EUROPE CAN HAVE SERIOUS AND LONG-TERM EFFECTS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH OF CHILDREN IN DISPLACEMENT.

33. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/protecting_syrian_children_en_route_to_europe_feb_2017.pdf

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

RRE's research has documented the harrowing human rights situation that is experienced by refugees and asylum-seekers throughout Europe, including tens of thousands of Syrian refugees who are seeking protection from war and conflict here. Syrian respondents across four research locations within two EU countries have reported endemic police and citizen violence, wholly inadequate living conditions and a startling lack of information on how to find out and realise their rights. Further serious concerns include the lack of gender-sensitivity surrounding camp designs and security provisions, and the entirely insufficient and inadequate protection systems for displaced children.

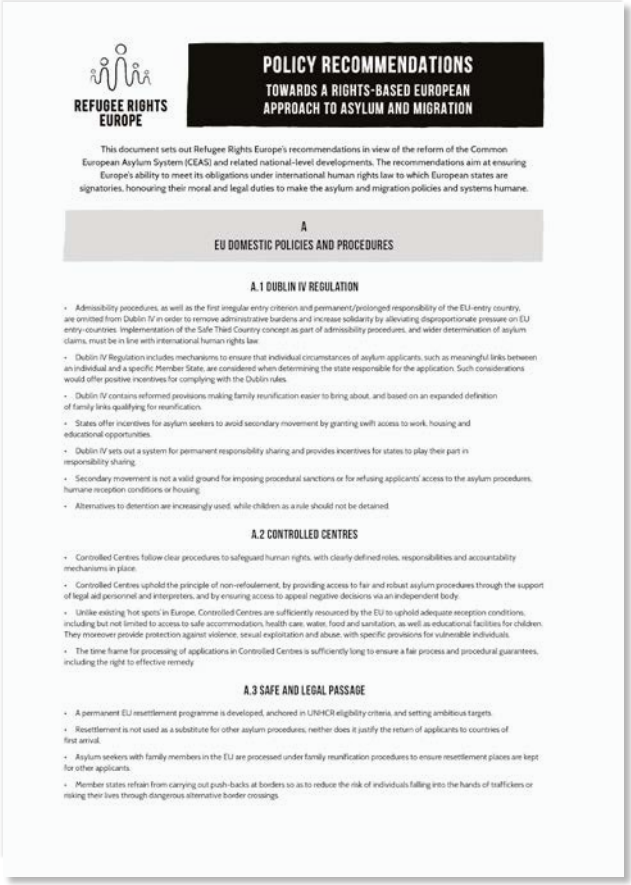
The research conducted by RRE amongst refugees from Syria and other countries during 2016-2018 shows that effective and sustainable policies and practices are urgently needed to secure the human rights of refugees and asylum seekers, as part of the European refugee relief response. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child must be at the centre of European policy initiatives, to ensure that the European refugee relief response upholds international standards.



THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD MUST BE AT THE CENTRE OF EUROPEAN POLICY INITIATIVES, TO ENSURE THAT THE EUROPEAN REFUGEE RELIEF RESPONSE UPHOLDS INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS.

Photo credit: Mohamad Saoud

Based on our findings, Refugee Rights Europe puts forward the following recommendations. In addition, we have previously published a set of specific recommendations in relation to the reforms of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), and the need for the strengthening of safe, legal routes to safety, including an EU-wide resettlement programme and expedited family reunification procedures. These are available online.



REFUGEE RIGHTS EUROPE

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
TOWARDS A RIGHTS-BASED EUROPEAN APPROACH TO ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

This document sets out Refugee Rights Europe's recommendations in view of the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and related national-level developments. The recommendations aim at ensuring Europe's ability to meet its obligations under international human rights law to which European states are signatories, honouring their moral and legal duties to make the asylum and migration policies and systems humane.

A
EU DOMESTIC POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A.1 DUBLIN IV REGULATION

- Admissibility procedures, as well as the first irregular entry criterion and permanent/prolonged responsibility of the EU-entry country, are omitted from Dublin IV in order to remove administrative burdens and increase solidarity by alleviating disproportionate pressure on EU entry-countries. Implementation of the Safe Third Country concept as part of admissibility procedures, and wider determination of asylum claims, must be in line with international human rights law.
- Dublin IV Regulation includes mechanisms to ensure that individual circumstances of asylum applicants, such as meaningful links between an individual and a specific Member State, are considered when determining the state responsible for the application. Such considerations would offer positive incentives for complying with the Dublin rules.
- Dublin IV contains reformed provisions making family reunification easier to bring about, and based on an expanded definition of family links qualifying for reunification.
- States offer incentives for asylum seekers to avoid secondary movement by granting swift access to work, housing and educational opportunities.
- Dublin IV sets out a system for permanent responsibility sharing and provides incentives for states to play their part in responsibility sharing.
- Secondary movement is not a valid ground for imposing procedural sanctions or for refusing applicants' access to the asylum procedures, humane reception conditions or housing.
- Alternatives to detention are increasingly used, while children as a rule should not be detained.

A.2 CONTROLLED CENTRES

- Controlled Centres follow clear procedures to safeguard human rights, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms in place.
- Controlled Centres uphold the principle of non-refoulement, by providing access to fair and robust asylum procedures through the support of legal aid personnel and interpreters, and by ensuring access to appeal negative decisions via an independent body.
- Unlike existing 'hot spots' in Europe, Controlled Centres are sufficiently resourced by the EU to uphold adequate reception conditions, including but not limited to access to safe accommodation, health care, water, food and sanitation, as well as educational facilities for children. They moreover provide protection against violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, with specific provisions for vulnerable individuals.
- The time frame for processing of applications in Controlled Centres is sufficiently long to ensure a fair process and procedural guarantees, including the right to effective remedy.

A.3 SAFE AND LEGAL PASSAGE

- A permanent EU resettlement programme is developed, anchored in UNHCR eligibility criteria, and setting ambitious targets.
- Resettlement is not used as a substitute for other asylum procedures, neither does it justify the return of applicants to countries of first arrival.
- Asylum seekers with family members in the EU are processed under family reunification procedures to ensure resettlement places are kept for other applicants.
- Member states refrain from carrying out push-backs at borders so as to reduce the risk of individuals falling into the hands of traffickers or risking their lives through dangerous alternative border crossings.

LIVING CONDITIONS

- Member States, with financial support from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), must ensure an acceptable standard of living for all displaced people on their territory, regardless of immigration status.[35]
- Member States must ensure that all individuals seeking asylum within their jurisdiction - whether in southern European camps, at transit points such as Ventimiglia and Calais or in major cities such as Paris and London - are provided with adequate accommodation.[36]
- All Member States must ensure that displaced people are provided with safe drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities, regardless of immigration status.[37]
- Member States must fulfil the right to food whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal.[38]
- All States must ensure full compliance with the principles of the best interests of the child and of family unity and ensure that no children or families are left in destitution, regardless of immigration status.[39]
- Regarding the catastrophic conditions currently unfolding on the Greek islands, the Greek government should put an end to the containment policy that is currently in effect. Living conditions on the islands and on mainland Greece must be vastly improved through the provision of sufficient services and dignified living conditions in order to meet European Directive standards.

34. http://refugeerights.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/CEAS-Policy-Recommendations.pdf
35. In line with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25, which states that the realisation of the right to an adequate standard of living requires as a minimum the enjoyment of subsistence rights i.e. adequate food and nutrition, clothing, housing and care as required and in accordance with the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.
36. In line with the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.
37. In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/2923 - which recognises the right to safe and clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life and all human rights -
38. In line with Article 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
39. In accordance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, as reaffirmed in Article9 of the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.



POLICE AND CITIZEN VIOLENCE

- Member States, through their Interior Ministries, should unequivocally instruct local police forces to refrain from the disproportionate use of force, tear gas and pepper spray, in particular against displaced people who are posing no threat. Authorities must immediately refrain from repeated dispersals and deportations.

- Member States must provide training for border control officials and police forces to ensure awareness of, and compliance with, international human rights obligations.[40] This includes putting an immediate end to illegal pushbacks, which violate the international principle of *non refoulement*[41], as well as specific training on safeguarding and protection mechanisms for vulnerable displaced people, including children and women at risk of trafficking.

- Member States, through local and national law enforcement officials, should implement monitoring and accountability processes, including a transparent complaints procedure, to ensure that allegations of police violence can be independently investigated and followed up, to secure access to justice for people in displacement and redress for violent crimes committed against them.

- Across Europe, reports of human rights abuses in detention centres must be urgently investigated to ensure that the rights of refugees and displaced people are upheld in line with international, EU and national law.

- Member States should provide instructions to national police forces to put an end to the intimidation and disruption of non-governmental aid groups operating on the ground to the effect that they are authorised to operate freely to deliver their services.



HEALTH AND ACCESS TO MEDICAL CARE

- Member States must ensure that displaced people are able to access healthcare without discrimination and regardless of their immigration status.[42]

- All states must ensure that healthcare, including care for mental health and special needs, is provided to all asylum applicants within their jurisdiction, as required.[43]

- National governments, the UNHCR and the WHO, as well as the European Commission through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient funding and resources to front-line organisations providing emergency and general healthcare, sexual and reproductive health services and mental health support to displaced people.

- Member States, with financial support from the European Commission and through appropriate civil society organisations, should deploy additional social workers, interpreters, therapists, medics and child safeguarding specialists, with specific provisions for women, girls and the victims of torture, to critical areas within the EU.

- Member States must make available sufficient resources for the identification of and support for victims of trafficking, including deploying specialist support workers; and put in place robust safeguarding and referral mechanisms during the asylum process.



ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

- Member States, with support from the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), must provide clear guidance on European asylum rules and procedures, in languages and formats that are accessible to displaced people, in addition to further information on organisations that can provide specific legal assistance.[44] Such information should be made accessible at recognised reception centres and through community outreach to ensure that all displaced people are able to understand their rights.

40. See Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 4 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union
41. See Article 33, 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and Article 3, 1984 Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
42. In accordance with the UN Declaration of Human Rights, Article 25.
43. In line with Article 19, paras. 1 & 2 of the EU Reception Conditions Directive,
44. in line with Article five, paragraphs one and two of the 2013/33/EU Directive

- The European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient resources to civil society organisations working to disseminate essential information quickly and effectively through translators and interpreters, including female-only interpreters when required.



SYRIAN WOMEN IN DISPLACEMENT

- Member States must work towards ending all violence committed against displaced women and immediately provide support for survivors of such violence.[45]

- Member States, in consultation with refugee women and non-governmental organisations working on the ground, and with the financial support of the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), must take steps to address the failings in camp design which leave women and girls at a heightened risk of sexual abuse. This includes the installation of appropriate lighting, single sex sanitation facilities and the relocation of such facilities in order to prevent sexual violence from occurring.[46]

- Member States, with financial support from the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and alongside appropriate civil society organisations, must make available specialist social workers and therapists to address the consequences of gender-based violence occurring against women and girls in displacement.

- The European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, must provide sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH) services in all camps, transit points and urban settings, in line with the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health[47]. This includes providing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) experts, training for sexual and reproductive health service providers and strong SRH coordination under a lead organisation. Discreet access to contraception, culturally appropriate educational materials regarding pregnancy and sexual health, as well as private and swift access to pregnancy tests and referral pathways are required.



SYRIAN CHILDREN IN DISPLACEMENT

- Member States must acknowledge and uphold the rights of the child enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe 2017-2019.

- Member States, with the support of the European Commission, through the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and other relevant funding mechanisms, should provide sufficient resources for child protection shelters with trained staff, social workers and therapists to prevent children from sleeping rough in European cities. All children must be guaranteed separate and secure accommodation whilst their age is being assessed and their application processed and whilst appealing the outcomes of their applications.

- Resources must be provided to ensure swift and dignified age-assessments.

- The detention of children, which has been deemed 'never in the best interest of a child' [48], must end under all circumstances.

- Local and national authorities should ensure that all unaccompanied children are identified and supported. Children must be immediately informed of their right to seek asylum and given adequate legal support, in languages that they understand and can communicate in.

- Member States must ensure that children have safe, legal routes to protection, including by accelerating family reunification claims under the Dublin regulation. Many of the children who are living on the streets of Paris may, for example, be eligible for protection in the UK under the 'Dubs' scheme or for family reunification.

- All children must be able to access education, regardless of their immigration status.[49]

45. In accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol, and with the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020.
46. In line with Article 21 of the 2013/33/EU Reception Conditions Directive.
47. http://iawg.net/areas-of-focus/misp/
48. OHCHR, February 2018. See: https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?LangID=E&NewsID=22681
49. In line with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 28 on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.



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