



# **During and After Crisis: Evros Border Monitoring Report**

November 2019 - April 2020



May 2020

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## Introduction

HumanRights360 is a Greek civil society organization focusing on advocacy, strategic communications and monitoring of human rights violations. Through the implementation of its project “Legal aid to Unaccompanied and Separated minors (UASCs) in Evros”,<sup>1</sup> HumanRights360 has acquired a comprehensive overview of the practices and the policy implemented in the area. Our field team has been supporting vulnerable people in the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) of Fylakio in the area, including people in the Pre-removal Detention Center of Fylakio, assuring the exercise of their legal and social rights and their access to protective services. HumanRights360 is also the only NGO in the field that supports extremely vulnerable cases, besides UASCs, such as LGBT individuals and SGBV survivors. In parallel, through missions in the area, HumanRights360 is monitoring the situation in European land borders of Evros with Turkey and further document, demonstrate and report upon the illegitimate practices, the flows and the patterns implemented, with focus on the illegal forced removals (push backs).



photo: Akis Maragkozikis

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<sup>1</sup> Operating since September 2018, through the kind support of Ascend Collaborative Initiative, Help Refugees, The King Baudouin Foundation & Global Whole Being Fund, Open Society Foundations, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, Forensic Architecture, European Program for Integration and Migration.



## Crossing Evros Borders in Numbers

Following the closure of the Western Balkan route, the EU Turkey Statement came into implementation in 2016, however the land border of Evros were not included in the scope of the Statement; subsequently, an increase of flows at the area through Evros river, the natural border between Greece and Turkey in the north, has been witnessed. According to the official statistics of 2019, 14.887 people [arrived through the land borders](#) and 4.875 [through the sea borders](#), putting more pressure mainly in northern Evros. As per December 2019, 440 people were hosted at the RIC of Fylakio, which is the only closed Registration and Identification center in Greece, a number that importantly exceeds its maximum capacity which was of 318 persons at this specific period. The number of unaccompanied and separated children (UASCs) under “protective custody”, a measure that is essentially equivalent to detention, within the

RIC remained high, reaching at the end of December 2019 the 245 children. Particularly, during the last three months of 2019 (October-November-December) 4.979 people arrived at the RIC, among whom 189 were UASCs.

According to the latest statistics, since the beginning of 2020, 2.076 people arrived through the land borders, approximately 250 people through the sea borders of the Evros region, while 7.623 people arrived through the Greek islands<sup>2</sup>. During January 2020, 861 individuals were registered within the RIC, out of whom 138 were unaccompanied minors. During February 2020, there was a total of 754 registered individuals within the RIC, 14 of whom were unaccompanied minors.

Within the RIC of Fylakio, the restriction of freedom of movement should, according to the legislation, be applied only in an extreme need, always in the best interest of children and for a maximum of twenty-five (25) days. After the completion of the reception and identification procedures, the newly arrived persons should be either released, or referred to pre-removal detention facilities, such as the Pre-removal Detention Center of Orestiada (PRDC), where they can be further detained in view of removal. In exceptional cases, the restriction of movement for the UASCs may

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<sup>2</sup> <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean/location/5179>, Last updated 03 May 2020

be extended for a period of twenty (20) days<sup>3</sup>. However, in practice, the majority of the UASCs remain in the RIC of Fylakio for much more than 45 days under the legal pretext of “protective custody”, while awaiting to get integrated into sheltering structures through the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS), which is the responsible authority for the placement. This widespread practice renders their restriction of movement in a “de facto detention measure”. According to most recent data (May 8<sup>th</sup>), there are 250 persons under registration and identification procedures at the Reception and Identification Centre (RIC) of Fylakio, among whom 151 are UASCs who remain under “protective custody” following the public prosecutor’s order, who serves as their temporary custodian<sup>4</sup>, while the average time for their transfer to a suitable shelter on the mainland is 6-8 months(!), contrary to the provisions of law<sup>5</sup>.

The “protective custody” status is a total problematic situation in Greece. According to the latest statistics of the National Center for Social Solidarity (NCSS), on 30/04/2020, 276 children were under “protective custody”<sup>6</sup>. NCSS highlights in its statistics that this figure refers to the minors which remained in the safe zones until their integration into sheltering structures. At the same period 151 minors remain in the RIC of Fylakio under protective custody waiting for several months to get integrated into sheltering structures. According to the same statistics, 1,699 places in total in long term accommodation (Shelters/SIL) and 659 places in total in temporary accommodation (Safe zones/Emergency hotels) are currently available in shelter facilities for children, while the total number of unaccompanied refugee minors in Greece is 5.099<sup>7</sup>, thus leaving a significant number of UASCs excluded from any protection system.

Taking into consideration the provision of the Greek law<sup>8</sup> pertaining to the “protective custody” of persons, it is easy to understand that the relative practice that is applied to UASCs constitutes a violation of this -in any case outdated- provision, since it is imposed as a precautionary administrative measure, and not as a criminal-repressive measure that concerns the restriction of personal liberty. Legal experts have repeatedly noticed the unconstitutionality of this provision from the beginning of its implementation, due to its opposition to Article 5 para. 4 of the Greek Constitution, but also due to its incompatibility with Article 5 of the ECHR. The violation of the abovementioned provisions is mainly based on the argument that the person who is under “protective custody”, on the one hand,

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<sup>3</sup> According to Law 4375/2016 as amended and in force.

<sup>4</sup> See, however, last paragraph of this report for current developments.

<sup>5</sup> Article 48 of Law 4636/2019 (Article 11 of Directive 2013/33 / EU).

<sup>6</sup> Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece 30 April 2020, EKKA, [http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91\\_2020/EKKA%20Dashboard%2030-4-2020.pdf](http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91_2020/EKKA%20Dashboard%2030-4-2020.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Situation Update: Unaccompanied Children (UAC) in Greece 30 April 2020, EKKA, [http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91\\_2020/EKKA%20Dashboard%2030-4-2020.pdf](http://www.ekka.org.gr/images/%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%91%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%A3%CE%A4%CE%99%CE%9A%CE%91_2020/EKKA%20Dashboard%2030-4-2020.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Article 118 of the Presidential Decree 141/1991

cannot exercise the right to be heard before the measure is imposed to him/her, and on the other hand is deprived of legal remedy for challenging the adverse administrative measure against him/her, which is subject to no maximum time limit<sup>9</sup>.

In this context and due to the lack of accommodation facilities or transit facilities for minors, this “de facto detention measure” is systematically imposed for UASCs and may be prolonged for even more than eight months. In the majority of the cases, the UASCs under “protective custody” remain in border guard units till their transfer to the RIC, such as in Evros region, , in pre-removal facilities, even in police stations in the mainland, [under unacceptable and degrading conditions for minors](#).

The practice of “protective custody” has been heavily criticized as it is undoubtful that the prolonged stay of UASCs in detention facilities, “constitutes a flagrant violation of their rights and poses a direct risk to their smooth unobstructed development”<sup>10</sup>. Despite the fact that the legislation clearly provides that UASCs “shall be detained only in an extreme need, always in their best interest, ...if it is proved that alternative and less restrictive measures cannot be applied... and every effort must be made in order for UASCs to be removed from detention and be referred to accommodation facilities suitable for minors and never in penitentiaries”,<sup>11</sup> in practice detention of UASCs is implemented as a rule and minors are subject to unfavorable conditions of deprivation of liberty. Even worse, any individualized assessment of their best interest takes place before or during detention, contrary to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while Greece has already been convicted by the ECHR regarding the detention of children under the pretext of “protective custody” (violation of Article 3, Article 5 and Article 13).

Furthermore, 2019 was yet another year stigmatized by the constant violations of human rights at the land borders of Evros, resulting to the exposure of migrants and refugees to possible ill-treatment or/and abuse. As a result, during spring of 2019, a significantly rapid increase of sea arrivals was noticed, while severe allegations of pushbacks have taken place at the land borders of Evros. In a number of cases, including cases of vulnerable persons, there are allegations of [informal forcible removals \(push-backs\)](#) of foreign nationals from Greece to Turkey through the Evros river. The first of a series of cases of reported pushbacks in the region of Evros, which HumanRights360 is examining in collaboration with Forensic Architecture, has been published: the [video](#) corroborates several testimonies of migrants crossing the Evros/Meriç river from Turkey to Greece, who have testified to be detained, beaten, and ‘pushed back’ across the river to Turkey, by unidentified masked men and in full secrecy, without being granted access to asylum procedures. However, Greek and EU

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<sup>9</sup> "Thoughts on the protection custody of persons under Article 118 of Presidential Decree 141/1991" (Defense Legal Magazine / 1993 / pp.1041-1045)

<sup>10</sup> Unacceptable conditions for the detention of unaccompanied minors in Northern Greece, Athens, 31 July 2017, Deputy Ombudsman for Children’s Rights of the Independent Authority, <https://www.synigoros.gr/?i=childrens-rights.en.news.446301>

<sup>11</sup> Article 48 of Law 4636/2019 (Article 11 of Directive 2013/33 / EU)

authorities systematically deny any wrongdoing and refuse to investigate these reports; this practice has severely escalated since the crisis in Evros (see section below).

### The new Legal Asylum Framework

Meanwhile, the new [controversial law](#) on asylum procedures, adopted on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2019, and came into force on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, included sweeping and fundamental changes to the existing asylum system, narrowing the criteria of eligibility for the refugee status and the categories of “vulnerability”; extending the detention period for asylum-seekers; accelerating the asylum procedures by limiting at the same time procedural safeguards; accelerating the returns of those deemed ineligible. It also included provision for the creation of a “safe countries of origin” list and other several stringent provisions, which could actually pose continuous traps to asylum seekers, facing the direct danger of a void asylum application in case of non-compliance with the asylum procedures. The new Law 4636/2019, which significantly reformed the existing international protection system in Greece, received strong criticism by the vast majority of the actors related with this field of work.

On April 10, 2020, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum submitted a bill entitled “Improvement of migration legislation” to public consultation, introducing further controversial reform to the Greek legislative asylum framework, proposing inter alia that the detention of third country nationals under return procedures should be the rule and that alternatives to detention will be applied only exceptionally. This amendment as adopted by the Greek parliament and came into force on 12/05/2020, is in clear violation with the relevant European Directive as it introduces, among others, a [generalized character to the measure of administrative detention](#), without any prior individualized assessment.

### Crisis on European Borders in Evros Region

Turkey’s [capacity to weaponize the refugee issue](#) was a product of the EU-Turkey deal; on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, President Erdogan announced that “Turkey will no longer stop Syrian refugees from reaching Europe”, informing at the same time the population with written or oral messages on their mobiles [that the borders with Greece are open for free crossing](#). 300 refugees and migrants gathered

at the border station of Kastanies by nighttime. Hellenic authorities shut down the station and announced the closure of the borders, while heavy police and military forces assembled at the border. On February 29th, the number of those gathered at the border rose to approximately 1.500, while the Chief of the Hellenic Army General Staff, the Minister of Citizen Protection and the Minister of National Defense visited the area, supporting the reinforcement of the police and military forces on the spot. Following the crowd's attempt to forcefully cross the border, violent incidents occurred, involving the use of chemical substances and tear gas.

According to the Hellenic authorities, on March 1<sup>st</sup> the number of persons gathered in the area was estimated at around 5.000, while 77 arrests along the borderline were announced. On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, those gathered at the border point of Kastanies gradually began to withdraw, following the information claims that they are driven towards the southern part of the prefecture, specifically the Evros Delta, where they attempted to [cross into the Greek side](#). At that point, it was estimated that 13.000 individuals were present at the borderline, while 3.000 remained at Kastanies. Violent illegal pushbacks of individuals who managed to cross the border were constantly reported. On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the site was visited by the Prime Minister along with the [EU institutions leaders in Evros](#); the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, and the Vice-President of European Commission- commanding officer for the promotion of the European way of life, Margaritis Schinas.

Undoubtedly, all these years Turkey has been using migration flows as a point of leverage to demand more political and financial concessions from the EU, and this leverage was once again activated. The Greek government was not wrong to call this move an “asymmetric threat”; but it was wrong to provide a response of “symmetric” use of force and violence. After announcing promises for more financial help but avoiding any tangible commitment for political action or burden sharing policies, EU leaders left Greece once more alone to do the dirty job; supporting Greece with more financial resources, but also threatening through the competent European bodies (Committees and Courts) on the violations of human and refugee rights’, inter alia, postponement of the access to asylum, extensive use of chemicals, [reports of shootings](#), and illegal pushbacks performed out in the open.



Photo: Marios Constantinides

European leaders once again refused to open the discussion of a permanent relocation scheme from Greece and a resettlement scheme from Turkey, which is the only fair and effective strategy to deal with the situation and continued the catastrophic policy of securitization and militarization of the borders. This policy derives from the dogma of deterrence in order to avoid the secondary movement in their countries, as well as from an EU policy of [boosting and militarizing border security](#), which builds upon prolonged lobbying by the European military and security industry.

Following relevant order by the Ministry, the record-keeping of those arrested changed and became sole responsibility of the military forces and the Hellenic police. Nonetheless, the RIC of Fylakio received requests by the police outposts and finally accepted to host 146 individuals of families and children, 10 of whom were unaccompanied minors. In an unprecedented move, the Greek government froze the reception of asylum applications for a month, which meant that all newcomers were treated as illegal entries without the right of access to asylum; many of them received penal convictions with sentences of imprisonment for illegal entry (see next section).

Following the incidents at the borders of Evros region, the far-right member of European Parliament (MEP) Ioannis Lagos was [pictured along with locals patrolling](#) the border from the illegal entrance of migrants and refugees early Friday of 6th of March. Moreover, members of an extreme-right German group traveled to Greece to help Greeks “defend their border”, as they claimed on social media, but were [instructed to leave the country](#) after local security services were informed of the group’s presence at the Greek-Turkish border. The group of 10 German and Austrian nationals of the Identitare Bewegung (Identitarian Movement), a far-right group with branches in several European

countries, traveled to Greece through the Promachonas border at Serres region. The groups were pictured on social media, holding Greek and Austrian flags and a banner that said: “No way. You will not make Europe your home.” Incidents at Kastanies and Buffer Zone continued to occur and on March 24th, it was estimated that approximately 2.000 to 2.500 individuals were present on the Turkish side of the border. Meanwhile, for all these persons a camp had been established by the Turkish authorities, providing food and carrying out disinfection procedures in the light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

On March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020, amidst the COVID-19 outbreak in its own territory, the Turkish authorities [finally evacuated the refugee camp](#) on the Turkish side in Kastanies borders by using violence, destruction, and fire, assuring the transfer of these people at the Turkish mainland.



photo: Marios Constantinides

## Evros incidents subsequently led to stricter procedures and amendments of legislation



photo: Marios Constantinides

Occasioned by the Evros incidents, the current law was implemented with extreme stringency. The first 17 Afghans who were arrested were immediately taken to the district court under fragrant criminal procedures; the adult men received a sentence of 3.5 years in prison for illegal entry, without the right of suspension and a fine of 4.000 euros, the adult women received a sentence of 3 years in prison for illegal entry, with the right of suspension and a fine of 5.000 euros, while a significant number of minors received a notice of a pending trial for illegal entry, against the provisions of Geneva Convention and the Common European Asylum System. Due to the strict criminal procedures followed by the district court, the exact number of the individuals who have been sentenced remains unknown, since most of them were immediately transferred to judicial prisons at the mainland, such as to Komotini and Thiva prison facilities.

The suspension of asylum applications that was immediately applied by an urgent legislative act for individuals who entered Greece illegally and were arrested by the Greek authorities after March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, depriving these people of the right to express their will to apply for asylum, was a clear-cut violation of [EU law and the UN convention on refugees](#); combined with the heavy militarization of the border zone, it led to [very low arrivals through the Evros region](#) during March and April. Specifically, in March there were approximately 350 arrivals through land borders, most of them arrested by the police forces of Alexandroupolis (approx. 190), of Orestiada (approx. 100), of Komotini (approx. 25) and by the coast guard (approx. 35). Main Countries of Origin of those people were: Turkey: 40%, Afghanistan: 40%, Iran : 10%, Syria : 10%. The most vulnerable cases concerned

families from Syria or Afghanistan or people from Turkey. None of them had the right to express their will to apply for asylum due to the current legislative act. Many families from Syria or Afghanistan are still detained at the PRDC of Fylakio with their minors, awaiting their transfer to the camps of Malakasa or Serres. Single men were transferred to the PRDC of Paranesti Drama or Xanthi. Since they were not asylum seekers, they had been given a deportation notice. For some of them there was already a trial pending, while for others a trial is expected to take place for illegal entrance into the country.

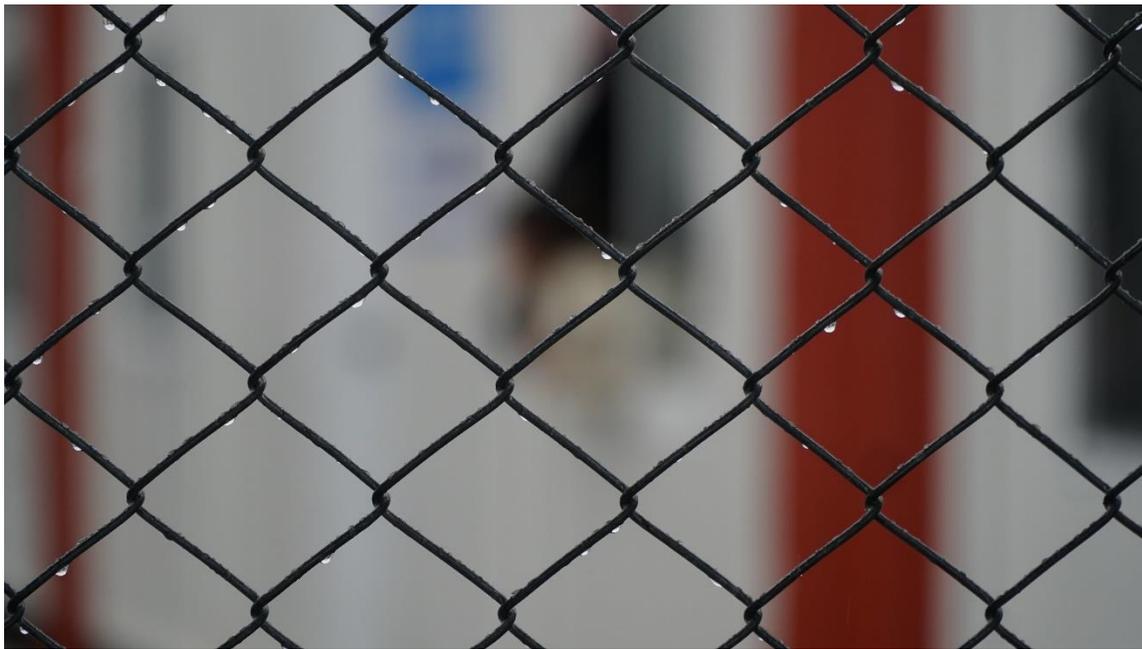


photo: Marios Constantinides

## The Detention Center at Kleidi of Serres

The Ministry of Migration and Asylum, upon Evros' region incidents, combined with the increasing number of boat arrivals on the islands of the eastern Aegean sea, subsequently announced the creation of a detention center for immigrants and refugees at Kleidi of Serres town, an area located near the Greek-Bulgarian borders, triggering severe complains from the Bulgarian side. The Bulgarian Foreign Minister Krasimir Karakachanov posted on his Facebook profile that "Accommodation of illegal migrants near our borders from the Greek side is a prerequisite for additional tension..and he stated emphatically that "The Bulgarian Army is ready, and I guarantee that I will not allow a new wave of migrants into the country", referring to fears that these migrants could somehow cross over and enter Bulgarian territory. In accordance to the general European anti-immigrant policy, the main purpose of this political decision was the new closed center to be utilized as a temporary host structure for those who entered the country illegally since March 1<sup>st</sup>, through Evros region and the Greek islands. Deprived of their right to apply for international protection, following the Ministry of Citizen Protection's statute, they would be hosted for a restricted time period before being deported back to their country of origin.

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020, the first 300 refugees and immigrants, mostly families and vulnerable individuals, were transferred from the islands to the closed camp of Kleidi, while the transfer of people who entered Greece through Evros region is still pending. The living conditions for those people within the center were improper and inhumane, infringing their dignity and totally violating their human rights. They were forced to live in plastic tents without heat and electricity, while they could not receive any kind of legal or social care support, appropriate nutrition or material goods. The police are the main responsible agency of the center, operating under the umbrella of the strict measures applied now, due to COVID-19 pandemic. Representatives of international aid community, such as IOM and ICRC, only recently managed to ensure constant presence and operation within the center by providing humanitarian aid, while other NGOs are not allowed to enter the center yet. There is still a significant need for social and material support as well as protection from practices that undermine refugees' social and civil rights.

### Covid-19 outbreak amidst the border crisis

The Covid-19 outbreak [complicated the situation](#). Direct and strict measures taken against COVID-19 by the Greek government, subsequently led the Greek asylum service to decide a suspension of all services to the public from March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 till April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in order to protect public health and limit the further dissemination of virus COVID-19. Recently it has been announced that the suspension will be extended until May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020. During this period, no registrations or asylum interviews will take place, neither notifications of asylum decisions or files of appeals.

Within the RIC of Fylakio, there are 4 wings (A-D) that host detainees, with 6 containers and 1 more wing (E) with 7 containers, all under National Public Health Organization (NPHO)'s medical superintendence. From the beginning of the COVID-19 restriction measures and the Agnodiki project applied in all RICs, 1 container in each wing, apart from wing E, has been reformed in order to host any potential COVID-19 patient. Moreover, 2 extra containers outside of the wings have been reformed into treatment rooms for any potential COVID-19 patients and protective measures among the employees and the police staff (masks, gloves, antiseptics, 2 meter distance rule, rotated physical presence, antiseptic methods to anyone that enters the RIC) have been taken.



photo: Marios Constantinides

The organizations and the institutions operating within the RIC continue to provide their services mainly via telecommunication, showing compliance with the containment measures announced by the Greek government or by rotated physical presence for each member. It has been announced by the UNHCR that projectors and screens will be very soon put into the RIC in an effort for the detainees to be constantly informed about the COVID-19. The National Public Health Organization (NPHO), to ensure the coverage of the population's medical needs within the RIC, has appointed 3 psychologists, 3 social workers, 2 nurses, 2 first responders, 1 doctor, 1 midwife and 1 coordinator, who have daily presence at the premises of the RIC and are prepared to face any potential COVID-19 incident.

Because of the suspension of the asylum applications, applied by the legislative act for individuals who entered Greece illegally and were arrested by the Greek authorities after March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020, as well as the direct and strict measures taken against COVID-19 by the Greek government, the RIC does not accept newly arrived people within the premises until further notice (at least until May 10<sup>th</sup>). During March, 146 individuals in total, 10 of whom were minors, were exceptionally recorded at the RIC, in an attempt to decongest local police stations and detentions centers. The last registration within the RIC concerned two Syrian unaccompanied minors, who arrived at the RIC on appr. 20 of March, after a direct order of the prosecutor to get under “protective custody” and as soon as they entered the premises, they were put into a 14-day quarantine. Recently, 12 more people detained at the PRDC of Fylakio, were transferred to the RIC and were also put into a 14-day quarantine. No COVID-19 incident has yet been noticed or announced within the premises of the RIC in Fylakio Orestiada.

There are, also, approximately 133 people in detention at the Pre-removal Detention Center in Fylakio (PRDC)<sup>12</sup>, with a capacity of 374 people, assuring that as for now no overcrowding situation exists. Due to the measures taken against COVID-19 by the Greek government, the access of the NGOs and their Lawyers to the premises of the PRDC and the detainees has temporarily been suspended till further notice. The official reply of the director of the PRDC, to relevant requests by members of the NGO's that are active at the field was the following: "Visits of NGOs or individuals to police and detention centers as well as their actions are suspended till further notice. Access is allowed only to those who work there... As an exception, in special cases where the physical communication of lawyers with detainees is required, and these cases need to be adequately justified, telephone contact with the director of the detention center is a prerequisite, regarding the approval or not of contacting detainees." Therefore, UNHCR is the only organization that has limited access within the premises and the detainees of the PRDC. Even before the above suspension, the members of the NGO's and Lawyers had to provide an early notice, at least 3 days before the visit, in order to get an access approval and meet with the detainees.

The personnel within the PRDC in Fylakio, Orestiada, apart from the police staff, has been appointed by the Health Units S.A. and consists of one psychologist, two nurses and one doctor. During March, a social worker and an administrative employee have been also appointed and one more doctor and interpreters are being expected to arrive soon at the PRDC. The personnel and the police assured that additionally to the disinfection within the premises, also leaflets and posters of the general secretariat for civil protection regarding COVID-19 have been placed in prominent points within the detention center. No COVID-19 incident has yet been noticed or announced within the premises of the Pre-removal Detention Center in Fylakio.

This last period, during the COVID-19 measures, the RIC of Fylakio faces the postponement of the children's transportation to shelter facilities at the mainland, forcing unaccompanied and separated children to remain under "protective custody" for more than 6-8 months, in a close reception center that was not set up or functioned at first place for this reason. Eventually, on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2020 the first transportation of a minor to a shelter has taken place after a long period, under strict COVID-19 measures.

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<sup>12</sup> Updated 08 May 2020

## An eye to the Future: A constant need for a vigorous and collective advocacy of Human Rights

Within these unprecedented developments, the new legislation that passed on May 8<sup>th</sup> triggered a storm of reactions by humanitarian organizations, civil society, and legal actors. In the view of the flagrant incidents at the Evros region borders during March 2020, the inhuman conditions for refugees on the Greek islands and the constant curtail of human rights guarantees, this controversial reform of the legislative framework, comes only three months after the overhaul of the Greek asylum legislation brought about by the International Protection Law 4636/2019. The unstable situation for people seeking for international protection, due to the constant legal reformations, the strict border politics under the safe umbrella of the dissemination of virus COVID-19, the EU's refusal to open the discussion of a permanent relocation scheme from Greece and a resettlement scheme from Turkey, as the only fair and effective strategy to deal with the situation, will undoubtedly lead to a continuity of the inhuman policy of securitization of the borders and therefore, to violations of human rights. The respect and the defense of Human Rights, that stem from the Geneva Convention relating the status of Refugees, the EU Law and the international standards, constitute unfaltering high principles that need to be assured, especially in a sensitive region as Evros. HumanRights360 with its efforts, actions, and presence at the field, can and will continue to defend the legal guarantees in international protection procedures, support people who are forced to flee their country of origins.



Photo: Orestis Seferoglou

PS: As these lines are written (May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020), our field team informed us of yet another turmoil in the area. On May 12, tension within the RIC of Fylakio began in Wing D, with detainees burning their mattresses and blankets protesting for their prolonged period of detention under “protective custody”. The situation rapidly escalated to include also Wings B and C. The premises were evacuated from personnel and NGOs, and there was an intervention of police forces. Fortunately, there were no severe injuries. 28 persons, of whom 2 adults, were arrested; they all have been transferred to Neo Chimonio police station.

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