09 2020

Save Dignity, Save Pikpa and Kara Tepe

More than 160 Greek and international organizations, academics and other actors from all over Europe urge the Greek authorities to revoke decision to close dignified alternatives in accommodating refugees on Lesvos

Athens, 30 September 2020 - We, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakis, and the local authorities of Lesvos to repeal their decision to terminate the operations of PIKPA and Kara Tepe facilities for vulnerable asylum seekers on the island of Lesvos. The authorities **should not only revoke the decision to shut down these facilities, but in this time of great need, they should further strengthen and protect all dignified alternative solutions for asylum seekers' housing and protection.**

In the last five years, PIKPA and Kara Tepe have sheltered vulnerable people escaping from the deplorable living conditions in the Reception and Identification Center (RIC) of Moria, a dangerous place where residents' health and safety was continuously in jeopardy. The decision to shut down these facilities comes only a few days after a devastating series of blazes burned camp Moria to the ground, leaving more than 12.000 women, men and children with no access to shelter, food and water.

While a new “emergency” camp has been set up on the island, which is currently hosting former residents of Moria camp, many of the signatories present on the ground report significant gaps in protection, access to electricity, water supply and sanitation, safety and security. For as long as the conditions in the RICs are undignified for human beings, alternative responses will be needed, to protect the most vulnerable. PIKPA and Kara Tepe should now by all means continue to offer accommodation and protection solutions that are appropriate, especially for the most vulnerable, including unaccompanied and separated children, single mothers, victims of torture and ill treatment, male and female survivors of gender-based and sexual violence, and people with disabilities.

PIKPA, an open, self-organised solidarity space, has provided essential services and assistance to refugees on Lesvos since 2012. In 2016, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), awarded the Nansen Refugee Award to one of the co-founders of PIKPA, in recognition of their work saving lives and providing a safe haven for the most vulnerable during the refugee ‘crisis’ in 2015. Today, PIKPA hosts unaccompanied children, single mothers and persons that have suffered torture or ill treatment, as well as many people with heightened vulnerabilities. Survivors of torture and ill treatment suffer from chronic physical pain for years after their abuse, and psychological symptoms such as anxiety, depression, withdrawal and self-isolation, post traumatic stress, known as PTSD etc. PIKPA offers a dignified and safe space for the survivors who would otherwise be continuously re-traumatized in an unsafe environment.

Kara Tepe has been run by the municipality with a capacity of more than 1,000 people. It has offered humane living conditions to vulnerable asylum seekers and families that were transferred there from Moria, including single parents, people with disabilities, and

many families with health problems. It has been lauded for its infrastructure and community-like atmosphere.

While it is unclear where current residents of PIKPA and Kara Tepe will be transferred, the undersigned are convinced that going to the new "emergency" camp would endanger their physical and mental health and should be avoided at all costs. In addition, PIKPA and Kara Tepe could actually take in and better provide for the individuals who are more "at-risk" currently residing in the new Lesvos RIC. This would be especially important for people with disabilities, for example, as there are no accessible latrines in the new RIC at this time.

We urge Greece's national and local authorities:

To immediately halt the closure of PIKPA and Kara Tepe and to support and further enhance their outstanding contributions. At the same time the authorities should seek solutions in line with human rights standards for the operation of the new temporary camp in Lesvos, pursuing the ultimate goal of its steady decongestion, and providing adequate standards in terms of safety, water, sanitation and medical assistance to all residents, until all are moved to safer and dignified accommodation conditions".

The signatories:
A Buon Diritto Onlus
ActionAid Hellas
Agir pour la paix
Aid Brigade
AITIMA
Amnesty International

Anders Wachsen
ANTIGONE - Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence
Are You Syrious (AYS)
ARSIS - Association for the Social Support of Youth
Asociacion Pro Derechos Humanos de Andalucia (APDHA)
Asociación SINGA España
Association européenne de défense des droits de l'Homme (AEDH)
Babel Day Centre
Basta Violenza alle Frontiere
Be a Robin
Better Days
borderline-europe e.V.
Calais Action Brighton
Casetta Rossa
Catch a Smile asbl
Centre Avec asbl
Centre de formation Bienenberg
Changemakers Lab
Choosehumanity
Chorleywood4Refugees
Christian Peacemaker Teams
Christian Peacemaker Teams Netherlands
Church and Peace
Coexistence and Communication in the Aegean
Collectif de soutien de l'EHESS aux sans-papiers et aux migrant-es
Collectif pour une terre plus humaine
Collective Aid
Comité de Solidarité avec le Peuple Grèce de Lyon
Coordindora de Barrios
CPT - Aegean Migrant Solidarity

CRIBS International
CRID - Centre de recherche et d'information pour le développement
Diotima
Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Defence for Children International
Defence for Children International - Italy
Defence for Children International - Netherlands
Defence for Children International Greece
Defensa de Niñas y Niños - Internacional , DNI España
Défense des enfants International Belgique
Député Wallon (Belgique)
Destination Unknown campaign
Distribute Aid
Doctors Worldwide
Donate4Refugees
ECHO for Refugees
ECHO100PLUS
Ecological Movement of Thessaloniki
European Institute for Progressive Cultural Policies
ELIX - Conservation Volunteers Greece
ENAR – European Network Against Racism
ENOUGH IS ENOUGH - rehabilitate Human Dignity
European Women's Lobby
Everyday, just a smile
Fenix - Humanitarian Legal Aid
Firetree Philanthropy
Firetree Trust
Fondation Danielle Mitterrand
foodKIND
FORGE for humanity
Fresh Response

Friends Of Refugees
German Mennonite Peace Committee
Glocal Roots
Greek Council for Refugees
Greek Helsinki Monitor
Griechenland Solidaritätskomitee Köln
Heimatstern e.V.
Hello My Friend
Help Refugees / Choose Love
Herts for Refugees
HIAS Greece
HIGGS
Hoffnung leben e.V., Bonn, Deutschland
Hope and Aid Direct
HuBB - Humans Before Borders
Human Rights Watch
Humanitas, Centre for Global Education and Cooperation
Humanity Now
HumanRights360
Initiative for an alternative mental health
Initiative for the Detainees' Rights
InterEuropean Human Aid Association
International Centre for Refugees ICERAS
International Federation of Social Workers, European Region (IFSW Europe)
International Rescue Committee
INTERSOS
InterVolve
Iride
Jelscha Dietrich
Jesuit Refugee Service Greece
Khora Community Centre

La Luna Di Vasilika ONLUS
Latitude Adjustment Podcast
Le Paria
Legal Centre Lesvos
Lesvos Solidarity
Love Welcomes
Make Mothers Matter
MAMbrella
Medecins du Monde/ Greece
Medecins Sans Frontieres -Doctors Without Borders -MSF
Medico International
Melissa: Network of Migrant Women in Greece
Mennonite Mission Network
Mennonitisches Friedenszentrum Berlin/Mennonite Peace Center Berlin
Migrant Voice
Migrations Libres
MiGreat
Mαζί/Together/معاً
Network for Children's Rights
One Family-No Borders
One Happy Family
ONGD CEPAC-IB
Open Cultural Center
Organization Earth
Owl's Watch
Pampiraiki Support Initiative for Refugees & Migrants
Parroquia San Carlos Borromeo
Peaceful Borders
People in motion
Pluspunt Netherlands
Pro Asyl

Project Armonia
Protestant Association for Conscientious Objectors and Peace (EAK), Germany
Rechtsanwältin
Refugee Aid Network Uk
Refugee Compassion
Refugee Education And Learning International
Refugee Law Clinic Berlin e.V.
Refugee Rescue
Refugee Support Aegean (R.S.A.)
Refugee Support Europe
Refugee Trauma Initiative
Refugee Youth Service
Refugees International
REFUGYM
RefuNet
Reseau Foi & Justice Afrique Europe Antenne France
Respekt für Griechenland e.V.
Rethinking Refugees - Knowledge and Action
Safe Passage UK
SAO Association for displaced women
Seebruecke Wuppertal
ShowerPower Foundation
Side by Side Refugees
SolidarityNow
Still I Rise
Stop Precarite
Support Art Workers (Greece)
Symbiosis-School of Political Studies in Greece
Terre des hommes Hellas
Thalassa of Solidarity
Vasilika Moon

Velos Youth
Verein FAIR
Voice Of Ezidis
Wiltshire For Refugees
Yoga and Sport For Refugees
Youth for Refugees
Youth organization "Protests"

Also endorsed by:

Prof. dr. Ilse Derluyn, Centre for the Social Study of Migration and Refugees (CESSMIR), Department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy

Vassilis Pavlopoulos , Associate Professor of Cross-Cultural Psychology - National and Kapodistrian University of Athens

Dr. Antonello D'Elia, Presidente di Società Italiana di Psichiatria Democratica Onlus

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Athina Fragkouli, President of the Board of the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos