

**PUBLIC STATEMENT – for immediate release**

**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 Lesbos**

Athens, 30 September 2020 - We, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarakis, and the local authorities of Lesbos to repeal their decision to terminate the operations of PIKPA and Kara Tepe facilities for vulnerable asylum seekers on the island of Lesbos. 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 Lesbos 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  
INTER SOS  
InterVolve  
Iride  
Jelscha Dietrich  
Jesuit Refugee Service Greece  
Khora Community Centre  
La Luna Di Vasilika ONLUS  
Latitude Adjustment Podcast  
Le Paria  
Legal Centre Lesbos  
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  
Μαζί/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:**

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- 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
- Hellen Gerolymatos McDonald, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, MSW, Clinical Associate Professor, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, School of Social Work, U.S.A (The opinions are Hellen McDonald's and not those of the University of Illinois)
- Luciano Rondine, Settore immigrazione e inclusione sociale, Centro di prevenzione psicosociale Nodo Sankara
- Joanna Kato, chair of Human Rights & Social Responsibility Committee of the European Association for Gestalt Therapy (EAGT)
- Athina Fragkouli, President of the Board of the Society of Social Psychiatry P. Sakellaropoulos

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