



EMBASSY OF GREECE
HELSINKI

Dear Professor Jauhainen,
after consulting a number of academics¹ and workers with the Greek Asylum Service², I am forwarding to you this text with remarks and comments on your field research in Lesbos and the relevant Report.

I kindly request to upload this text on www.umi.fi/julkaisut as the response of the Greek side to your Research, on "Asylum seekers and migrants in Lesbos, Greece". I think this to be only fair, since you affirm, in your Report's Conclusions, that "... Greece violated human rights and neglected international and EU asylum principles..." (p. 87).

The Greek Government and myself, as Greek Ambassador to Finland, have taken such an accusation very seriously. Therefore your Report was thoroughly studied. I am really sorry to say that we have serious trouble with it. This is not for the sole reason of major methodological shortcomings in the field research and severe breaches of academic ethics we observed in the Report. We have more trouble with the Report's conclusions, as well as with the Report's underpinning assumptions. The Report's shortcomings, errors and ethical breaches are pointed out below in Section A. Moreover, the Report's underpinning assumptions about the status of migrants on Greek territory, their rights and their future in Greece are addressed in Section B.

A1) In 8 days (Nov 1st-8th), the Report's two authors (plus their local assistant in Lesbos) approached a significant number of "asylum-related migrants", out of whom 625 accepted to fill the questionnaire. The average of respondents per day of the research is 78. As the authors state, "the questionnaire sheet was returned usually in 15-20 minutes" (p. 13). This entails a presence (of the three person-strong research team) in the field for at least 18 hours per day, taking into account that not everyone approached and "explained the scope and ethical principles of the research" agreed to fill the questionnaire. On the other hand, more than one questionnaires could have been filled by different persons at the same time. Therefore, when the authors refer to the daily timetable of their work in the field as being "usually from late morning to the early evening" (p.13), they modestly understate the extremely dense labour of the 8 days they spent in Lesbos. Though many respondents (almost 35-40%) seem not to have checked all entries, the sizeable volume of the replies [66 questions, of which 15 offered a multiple-choice reply and 5 were open-ended, coming from persons of 21 different nationalities who replied in 7 different languages] was translated, the data were quantitatively processed & statistically treated and the Report was drafted in, more or less, 120 days (Nov. 9th-March 9th)! Which is a feat of social research & analysis, that required Herculean labour.

A2) The selection of the respondents who provided the key material of the Research in Lesbos, is a source of significant methodological concerns. It is doubtful whether the 625 respondents make up a random (and, therefore, representative) sample of the migrants on the island. The respondents are only part of those migrants that the researchers were able to approach.

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Angelos Syrigos, Assistant Professor of International Law and Foreign Policy, Panteion University of Social and Political Science, Athens. To both I express my deep gratitude for their guidance and advice.
2 Niklas Syrjänen, PhD Candidate and Eirini Flevaridou (PhD). I indebted to both for their valuable assistance.

A3) On the other hand, the 25.000-strong compound of Moria is a sort of a jungle, a "no man's land", since the UNHCR prevents Greek Authorities to patrol and efficiently police it. In Moria, as well as anywhere migrants reside or simply hang-out, a motley crowd of NGOs exercise a tremendous influence on them, shaping the migrants' behaviour, attitude, decisions, availability and public statements. This is possible since the NGOs control the most essential parameters of migrants' everyday life: their access to free food, their hygienic situation, medical care, their daily allowance, and most importantly, the outcome of their asylum request. That the NGOs exercise a behind-the-scenes determinative influence over the long process of approval or rejection of applications for political asylum might not be entirely true. Yet, it is entirely believed by the migrants. Such a belief is systematically instilled by the NGOs and often confirmed by the migrants' own perception of who is finally granted asylum and who is not. Therefore, under the circumstances, the scientific accuracy of any field research conducted in Lesvos with either the assistance or connivance of asylum-related NGOs is significantly compromised. Not less than any survey in Palermo's suburbs "blessed" by the local Mafia operatives, or any survey in the Gaza Strip which is "assisted" by Hamas.

A4) Issues (and concerns) related to the methodology of the Research are not limited to the representativity of the sample and the sincerity of the respondents. Other aspects shall be also considered, such as the choice of the researchers to cooperate with asylum-related NGOs (= interviews to get information that helped to put the survey's findings in context, data sharing, facilitating the researchers' access to "asylum-related migrants"- see p.13-14 of the Report), as well as the particular selection of NGOs the researchers made. NGOs dealing with refugees in Lesvos and Greece are, in their vast majority, NOT the very embodiments of the Biblical "good Samaritan". They are far from being neutral, unselfish agents, with no vested interests. They are regular recipients of EU money, distributed either directly from Brussels or via the UNCHR. They have significant budgets and insignificant transparency. They ferociously compete and lobby pushing a variety of political agendas. If funding is to flow in, then migrants' arrivals are indispensable to asylum-related NGOs. Even more, the sustained misery of the migrants is, perhaps, the most efficient fund-raising tool. Therefore, overcrowded camps with inadequate sanitary infrastructure turn out to be, quite often, an extremely profitable condition, hence a carefully preserved one.

A5) In the light of the asylum-related NGOs vested interests and, subsequently, their role in shaping the migrants' situation in Lesvos, the choice made by the authors of the Report to cooperate with specific asylum-related NGOs during their field-research, raises also serious issues of ethics. Not only because nowhere in the Report the criteria of this selection of specific NGOs are explained. But also because this choice of the authors is combined with another one: to systematically ignore in their Report the views of the Greek Authorities about the situation in Lesvos, as well as to ignore the data and statistics of the Greek Authorities about the migratory influxes. There is equally no explanation in the Report of why the authors opted so. Academic ethics compel the authors to have mentioned the views of the Greek Authorities, since throughout their Report they implicitly or directly criticize Greece for deliberately violating, in a variety of ways, the migrants' human rights.

A6) As it stands, the Report implies that Greece is depriving migrants in Lesvos (and, by extension, throughout Greece) from elementary aspects of their quality as human beings. More specifically, the Report depicts Greece to deliberately inflict inhuman and degrading treatment to migrants, by incurring them to camps, denying them elementary rights, condemning them to "bare lives" in which their "ontological status as subject is suspended", their "political agency", identities and past canceled (pages 22, 23, 86). No evidence is provided to support these extremely grave accusations. The responses to the questionnaires offer absolutely no such evidence. Yet, as a theoretical dark cloud,

these charges emanate from the Report's constant references to the work of other scholars, references which are deemed by the Report's authors *perfectly* to describe what is really happening in Lesvos and to introduce the Report's reader into the (de)theoretical model suitable to interpretate and conceptualize the situation there.

A7) On page 21 of the Report, one can read that:

Many current camps bear features of former European colonial camps aimed at territorial protection, oppression, ethnic cleansing and labor control (Martín et al 2019).

There are no quotation marks indicating that this is a verbatim citation from Martín et al, so the text seems to be rather a hybrid product of what Martín and al actually wrote in their work and of how the Report's authors perceived it. In any case, the Report's authors used this description in order to ~~compare~~ it ("history ~~of~~ camps") on the reception centers (or camps) in Lesvos. So they did, without respecting their elementary academic obligation to provide evidence, what-so-ever! Ethnic cleansing have you said?

A8) The authors of the Report depict Greece as a state widely practicing camps ("spaces of exception") to protect "the socio-biopolitical body of the titular nation", to deal "with populations that disturb the national order of things" (page 22). An extremely negative and false image of Greece is constructed by the authors, throughout their Report, in a devious and insidious way. Directly leveled accusations (see pages 85-87 in the Report's Conclusions) are rather humble, compared to the skillfully crafted overall message that the Report exudes: a rampant, slow mass-annihilation of migrants is taking place in Lesvos through ~~inhuman~~ and degrading treatment, the direct perpetrator of which is ~~Greece~~ and ~~foreign~~ Greece. Apparently, the authors concluded that there was so much compelling evidence supporting the above-mentioned verdict, that there was no need to invite the accused to say a word!

A9) Promulgating political and ideological manifestos is an inalienable right of everyone, including of academics. Nevertheless, if the Report's authors and the University of Turku feel so inclined, they need not to promote political/ideological credos in form of social-sciences academic research. In any case, the least they could have done was to mention (somewhere in the Report!) how and by whom the whole research project was financed.

A10) A collateral damage of the authors' decision to ignore the views of the Greek Authorities is their assertion that the Moria Reception and Identification Center, in Lesvos, "is run by the Greek national authorities and the UNHCR is also significantly involved in the actual management" (p.34 of the Report). Should the authors had interviewed the Greek Authorities (or inquired more in depth), they might have come up with a more mitigated and detailed perception of who actually "runs" and "manages" the Center, therefore who is to be held accountable for the inhuman conditions, described in pages 34-38 of the Report. The authors failed to discern who had (and still has) the money and the authority to spend it on drastically improving Moria's infrastructure with sewage system, baths, kitchens, sanitation etc. At this point, it is imperative to point out that Greece was ravaged by a catastrophic, ten-year long (2009-2019) fiscal and economic crisis, which resulted in draconian cuts of the public expenditure, ~~throughout~~ these years. This overriding condition (during the whole period that migrants flows into Greece have exploded) was entirely missed by the Report's radar.

A11) The above-mentioned radar failure is not the Report's only one. The authors also failed to consider how the European Commission unilaterally interpreted the EU-Turkey statement of March 18th, 2016 and how this impacted on the migrants' condition in Lesvos. Against all Greek objections and pleas, the Commission ruled and has maintained that any returns of migrants to Turkey under the Statement regard only persons present on the Greek Aegean Islands and NOT migrants transferred to

the Greek mainland. Turkey obliged by scrupulously implementing the Commission's ruling. This is the main reason for the Moria's population to bloat. It equally explains why migrants' returns to Turkey have been insignificant! As a result, all Greek Islands were inundated with migrants who were stuck there, cut off from clandestine routes and practical chances to reach the European North. By the same token, the NGOs chorus was more than happy, since overcrowded Reception Centers on the Greek islands and the ensuing miserable conditions provided the NGOs with a golden opportunity to obtain, again, more funds, along the established pattern of the tacit EU's practice on migration [to be resumed as: "pay (the UNHCR & the NGOs) and ignore"].

A12) An additional breach of academic ethics lies into the Report's blind acceptance of the statistics and data regarding the boats and migrants prevented by the Turkish Authorities to reach Lesbos. As source of the Report's frequent references (see pages 6, 14, 25, 26, 29) on how many migrants were stopped by the Turkish Coastal Guard, the authors have chosen a Norway-based NGO, called "Aegean Boat Report" (ABR). The ABR clearly quotes the Turkish Government as the source of all data regarding boats stopped in Turkish territorial waters. Interestingly enough, the ABR does not refer to the Greek Authorities for migrants' arrivals on the Greek islands. Instead, the ABR relies on "data reported by volunteers on the ground, collected and organized by Aegean Boat Report". In this way the established policy of the Report's authors to ignore any data or statistics by the Greek Government is not breached³.

A13) Migratory flows are a matter of controversy and negotiation between Turkey and the EU. Turkey demands to be remunerated on the basis of the number of migrants prevented to crossover EU territory. Therefore data and statistics presented by Turkey on this matter are, for good reasons, of low credibility. Yet, this has not deterred the Report's authors from unquestionably adopting the Turkish allegations on how many boats and migrants were stopped from crossing to Lesbos, the (Turkish) claim being two out of three.

A14) The Report's authors remain extremely careful when referring to Turkey and Turkey's policies related to migratory flows. They validate Turkey as an honest care-taker of migrants, fully respectful of their individual rights. There is one negative comment for Turkey in the whole Report, and – deftly enough – is a quotation: "Hoferloch and Kurban (2017) argued that the EU-Turkey Statement did not contribute to sustainable and effective policies to handle migration. Instead, it "opened the gates to extortion" in the aftermath of (geo)political actions in Turkey, as well as in Turkey's geopolitical intervention outside its direct territory" (p.26).

A15) The Report refers (see p.7, 26) to the incidents in the Greek-Turkish land border, in which tens of thousands of migrants were involved. These events were "breaking news" for the world's media on February 28th and culminated in the days and weeks that followed. Surprisingly for social-science experts on asylum seekers, the Report's authors have completely failed to notice / comment / evaluate the weaponisation of migrants by Turkey, even at this model case! More particularly, the authors failed to see that the migrants did not "gather" (p.26) in the land border but were brought there by special buses and trains hired by the Turkish Authorities, after the very same Authorities flushed them out from shelters all over Turkey where these migrants have been living and working during the last years. The Report's authors turned a blind eye on the extended media coverage of massive assaults from Turkish territory against the Greek frontier by hundreds of young men, equipped miraculously with fence cutters, cobble stones, petrol bombs and plenty of tear-gas grenades. These pitched battles that raged for almost ten days were nothing less than a model of hybrid attack, masterplanned by

3 One may, legitimately, ponder over the authors' criteria for selecting their sources. Definitely, one criterion seems to be the source's embargo on any information / data / argument stemming from the Greek Authorities.

Turkey's MJT and executed under the guidance of the Turkish Jandarma. Migrants have massively been used in this operation as nothing more than expendable ammunition. Their lives have been deliberately put at risk by the 'Turkish Authorities.

A16) On page 87 of the Report the authors do, at last, reach to the above-mentioned events: "The situation of asylum-related migrants in Lesbos became even more aggravated in 2020. They have been misused in political twists and turns between Turkey and the EU... Biopolitical actions were imposed over them in Lesbos, as well as elsewhere in the Greece-Turkey borderlands". This terse reference (in which Turkey is absolutely white-washed and exonerated from doing migrants any harm) is in full contrast with the Report's customary lyrical superfluity i.e: "Tightly connected to the notions of "slow death", "omnifarious lethality" and "slow violence", the phenomenon falls on psychic and bodily harm produced by an emergency situation... People endure emergency and cope with terrible living conditions over a long period... slow violence takes gradual forms of harm and damage, often out of sight of the wider public, including the situations inside camps for asylum-related migrants, such as that of Moria" (p.22)

Ignoring the ~~un~~ abuse of migrants' lives by Turkey, while they (legitimately) scrutinize the (same) migrants' plight in Lesbos, the Report's authors need, perhaps, to be reminded of the Evangelic verse: "Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel" (Matthew 23:24)

A17) Last, and perhaps least, breach of academic ethics by the Report's authors is that they implicitly put down on "nationalist Greek individuals" an "unexpected sudden fire" that "devastated One Happy Family community center for asylum-related migrants"⁴ (p.11). It would only serve the whole truth if the Report were not to spare few more lines to note that, on March 20th (12 days after the fire), the Greek Police arrested three persons and charged them with arson. Two of them are young Palestinian refugees, who had been granted, months before, political asylum. They traveled from Athens to Lesbos on tickets prepaid by a woman, holder of a Swiss passport, employed at the time by the "One Happy Family" NGO. After their arrival to Lesbos, the two Palestinian refugees were immediately transported by car to the site of the arson by a Greek national, resident of Lesbos, equally of Palestinian origin who has worked as a "volunteer" with the OHF for years. He provided them with the materials to commit the arson, assisted them in the crime and drove them back to the port where they boarded the next ferry to Athens. All three confessed their act and remain in custody. The Swiss woman was charged as accessory to the crime. Their trial is pending.

A18) It has been noted previously in this text (para A4) that not all of the asylum-related NGOs, present on the Greek islands, are mere "good Samaritans". Certainly, even fewer are angels. Which leaves a pretty lot of asylum-related NGOs and their people quite closer to the category of "fallen angels" (as defined in Abrahamic religions and the "Book of Enoch"). Facts on the ground establish these "fallen angels" to carry out (what the intelligence community defines as) "black ops" against Greece. The very same Greece that has, so far, tolerated asylum-related NGOs (like OHF) on its territory and offered political asylum, even the Greek citizenship to the suspects!!

B1) The Report and its conclusions look at the phenomenon of migrant influxes to Lesbos through a prism of set axioms and dogmas. Therefore, their perception of the situation in Lesbos is heavily

4 "The political situations became very tense also in Lesbos in March 2020 when some asylum-seeker helping NGOs, journalists and asylum-related migrants were attacked by nationalist Greek individuals and groups. As a result, several NGOs had to suspend their activities in Lesbos, at least temporarily. In addition, an unexpected sudden fire devastated One Happy Family community center for asylum-related migrants" p. 11 of the Report.

distorted. The authors approach the phenomenon by way of pre-fabricated concepts, hence their analysis is bound to *quod erat demonstratum*.

B2) First axiomatic "truth" (the authors serve themselves with in the Report) is that migrants have the individual, inalienable and supreme right to establish as residents wherever they wish, getting there by the itinerary and means of their choice.⁵ Which, literally, brings the migrants (on their way to Germany, Finland and the European North in general) to Lesbos. The Report's authors as well.

B3) Fleeing persecution and war is quite often not a choice, but the only way for people to preserve their lives. In the Greek legal system, the duty of the Greek state to provide safe haven to those "persecuted for their action in favour of Liberty" (see Article 5, par 2 of the Greek Constitution) is set free of mitigating conditions and terms. This is so, because of the ages-long Greek tradition in the matter (see below para B5). Bound by this constitutional provision enshrined in 1975, Greece has consistently protected and refused to extradite Turkish citizens who cross over to Greek territory, if they are persecuted for reasons of their political ideas or action.

B4) In the case of Afghans, Somalis, Pakistanis, Congolese, Algerians, Syrians etc (up to the 21 nationalities that the Report spotted on Lesbos) the situation is fundamentally different. For all these people, Turkey had been, already, a safe haven. While in Turkey, they were under no threat of extradition or forced return to their homelands. Their lives, freedom, personality were not endangered or immediately threatened in Turkey. They were not persecuted there, unless they can prove otherwise. The Report is coining a term for these people: "asylum-related migrants", because -as the Report openly admits- the request of (political) asylum is used by all these migrants just as an "entry mechanism" to the EU, where they want to come "for various reasons" (see page 5 of the Report).

B5) Relying on their first axiomatic "truth" about the migrants' individual rights (see para B2), the Report's authors, maintain that Greece is under legal obligation to consider the migrants' ostensible application for political asylum, irrespectively of their numbers and the ways the migrants force themselves in the Greek territory. In the ages-long cultural and political tradition that Greece delegated to contemporary Western societies, asylum was granted to save the life of those who were kneeling as suppliants (*υάτερ/ικέτες*) in front of the statues of Gods of the city-state. On the contrary, under the Report's underpinning dogma those migrants arriving to Lesbos are no more suppliants than the daily commuters in Charing Cross or in Gard du Nord railway stations. They simply exercise their individual right to free "mobility", inalienable under all circumstances and valid around the Globe. And Greece is compelled by the "1951 Geneva Convention and the related EU asylum legislation" says the Report - (see page 11) to bow to this supreme right of unhindered mobility and accept the migrants' presence on its territory.

B6) There is a second, thinly-veiled, axiomatic "truth" on which the authors establish their approach to the ["asylum-related migrants" in Lesbos] phenomenon: the collective rights of the Greek people, as enshrined in the Greek sovereignty and independence, are null and void, quashed by the migrants' individual rights. Moreover, concepts like the Greek sovereignty/independence/nation/collectivity/national identity are nothing more than vestiges of an obsolete conceptual order, dead (and almost buried) in the new era of the Global Civil Society, in which the individual is the only subject of rights and the measure of all things. History included!

⁵ On page 16 of the Report, this concept is accidentally defined in the following way: "asylum-related migration is the capability of people to apply for asylum in another country, as well as the aim or plan to exact such capability"