

January-August 2017

Humanitarian situation in Greece



“ I called my father in Iraq and told him that I am in Greece. It has been such a long time since I heard the voices of my family. We were crying with joy

Mariam, Iraq

Some 18,000 migrants have crossed from Turkey into the Aegean islands since the beginning of 2017. One in three people arriving in Greece is from Syria, followed by Iraqis and Afghans. An increase in people arriving from DRC has been observed. With the majority of those entering Greece fleeing war or persecution, access to asylum procedures is fundamental.



Despite a decrease in the number of shipwrecks, the ICRC estimates that in Greece more than 1000 dead migrants remain unidentified, leaving their families without knowing what has happened to their loved ones.

According to government figures, a total of 62,000 migrants remain in the Greek mainland and the islands. Although the situation has improved in many of the facilities across Greece since 2016, a number of challenges persist, particularly on the Greek islands where migrants face poor living conditions and overcrowding. The long waiting period for asylum applications for some of the migrants has added to tensions and to the negative impact on the mental and physical health of migrants.

From August onwards, the Greek government is taking over the provision of services to migrants in reception and identification centers on the Greek islands. While the ICRC welcomes this shift, it remains concerned with the humanitarian impact that a rapid transition might have on access to essential services as well as the protection of migrants, particularly the most vulnerable, such as unaccompanied minors, women and children.



Administrative detention of migrants continues to be a common practice in Greece. While the ICRC's position remains that detention of migrants should be an exceptional measure and that alternatives to detention should always be considered first, it has continued to support the authorities towards ensuring that migrants are held in adequate conditions of detention in pre-removal centers and police stations across Greece.

Our Impact

Protection for migrants in detention

More than **7,000** migrants held in detention facilities across Greece were visited by ICRC staff. The ICRC pursued its bilateral dialogue with the Greek authorities, to improve conditions of detention, including procedural safeguards and legal rights.



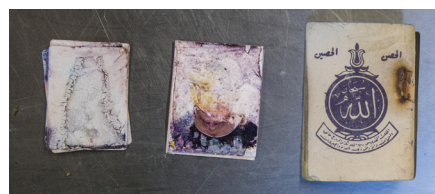
2,535 detained migrants were provided with hygiene items, clothing and other essential non-food items.

970 telephone cards were distributed to detained migrants (including unaccompanied minors) in order to contact their families.

2 rounds tables were organised by the ICRC and Greek Authorities on humanitarian issues in immigration detention and on Health Care in Detention.

Bringing back dignity for the dead: ICRC Forensic activities

9 human remains of deceased migrants were identified positively through continued support to Greek forensic authorities.



240 migrant graves in three cemeteries in Evros and Lesbos were improved in order to ensure future traceability of unidentified bodies.

Between January and August 2017 the ICRC donated to Greek first responders:

475 DNA kits

270 body bags

600 body tags

as well as **desktops, digital cameras, hard drivers, tie wraps** and **forensic anthropology equipment**.

Over **300** Hellenic Coast Guards officers were trained by the ICRC forensic team in procedures for the management of dead bodies.

Helping migrants to connect with their families, with the Hellenic Red Cross

With the support of the ICRC, the HRC provided nearly **7000** phone calls to migrants and collected **180** new tracing requests of which **23** were positively solved by the HRC TS in the last six months, using as well the online tool Trace the Face (www.familylinks.icrc.org/europe)



Mission

The ICRC's first humanitarian action in Greece dates back to the Turkey-Greece conflict in 1919-1923. Since then it has been present in Greece whenever humanitarian support was needed.

The ICRC mission was opened in Athens in March 2016 so as to contribute to the protection and assistance of migrants. It collaborates closely with the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement



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