



Some 32,500 migrants crossed from Turkey into the Aegean islands in 2018 with nearly half of them arriving on the island of Lesbos, followed by Samos and Chios. The majority are from Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq, with more than half of these being women and children. At the same time, arrivals through the Greek-Turkish land border recorded a sharp increase with almost 18,000 migrants crossing the Evros River last year (compared to 5,700 in 2017).

The sea and the land migratory routes from Turkey to Greece remain dangerous and even deadly, while people continue to get separated, leaving families in anxiety and despair. In 2018, according to official data, 174 people have died or went missing in the Aegean Sea and 39 perished while crossing the Evros River. The ICRC has collected more than 300 requests from families looking for relatives potentially missing in various shipwrecks in the Aegean Sea since 2015. Almost half of these cases (45%) concern children.

In addition, at least 28 migrants died in road accidents on roads in northern Greece last year in their determination to reach elsewhere in Europe.

According to the latest government figures, some 70,000 migrants remain in reception facilities across Greece. Although the situation has improved in many of these facilities, a number of challenges persist, particularly on the Aegean islands, where the constant arrivals and the continued geographical restriction have led to overcrowding of the facilities and thus to the deterioration of reception conditions.

In December 2018, close to 15,000 migrants were waiting for their asylum applications to be processed in the islands. The long waiting period of the asylum process for some of the migrants has added to tensions in the reception structures and impacts negatively on their mental health.

Data from the National Centre for Social Solidarity indicate that at the end of December 2018, the number of identified unaccompanied children in the country was 3,741, with more than a half of them living in inadequate structures –including at least 86 in protective custody– waiting for a place in age appropriate shelters.

The administrative detention of migrants is a regular practice in Greece and ensuring proper conditions remains a challenge in a number of locations. In some cases, vulnerable people, including women and children, were held for prolonged periods in inadequate facilities with limited access to basic services.

The ICRC reiterates its position: immigration detention should remain an exceptional measure and the detention of migrant children should be brought to an end.



“We were about to pull the [fishing] boat out of the water when we heard people talking. We saw three young men in the water calling for help. We pulled them out of the river, they were shivering badly. We brought blankets and water. They were crying from relief”

(P.M., farmer and fisherman in Evros Region)

How do we support migrants in Greece?



Bringing families together through our Restoring Family Links network

The Hellenic Red Cross (HRC), together with the ICRC, offered **1,415 phone calls** to migrants across Greece, collected **416 new tracing requests** and positively concluded **76** cases of families looking for their missing relatives.

With the technical support of the ICRC, **5 HRC tracing staff** strengthened their knowledge of electronic tracing tools, working procedures and practices.



Working on immigration detention

ICRC Delegates conducted **29 visits** to migrants in **15 places** of immigration detention across Greece and engaged with the competent authorities to ensure proper detention conditions and procedural safeguards, especially for the most vulnerable.

During the visits, ICRC provided **6,985 hygiene kits** and over **6,500 clothing kits** to detained migrants to ease their daily life.

2,947 phones cards were distributed to allow detained migrants to contact their families.

In coordination with Greek authorities, the ICRC organized **1 high-level round table**, **1 workshop** for Pre-Removal Centre (PRC) commanders and **2 information sessions** for the staff of the PRCs in Lesbos and Korinthos on humanitarian issues related to immigration detention.



Providing humanitarian forensic support

Greek first responders, forensic services and hospital morgues received **130 DNA kits**, **15 body bags**, and **150 body tags** as well as other forensic, photographic and IT equipment.

3 human remains of deceased migrants registered by the ICRC were positively identified by the Greek authorities.

110 Hellenic Coast Guards officers were trained in procedures for the management of dead bodies.

22 burials were improved at the new cemetery of Orestiada in order to improve future traceability.

The ICRC organized **2 meetings of forensic pathologists** at the Forensic Medical Service of Thessaloniki and at the University Hospital of Heraklion to discuss identification methods in forensic pathology as well as best practices in forensic photography and forensic anthropology.



Promoting IHL

In collaboration with the Hellenic Armed Forces, the ICRC organized **2 workshops** on International Humanitarian Law for **82 legal advisers** and **131 officers** of the Greek Army. Moreover, **235 officers** attended IHL induction courses and information sessions on the ICRC's mandate and activities organized in **3 Hellenic Armed Forces Colleges and Schools**.

