

Greece: Asylum seekers being illegally detained in new EU-funded camp

Background Information

The new EU-funded “closed-controlled centre” (KEDN) of Samos has been constructed in an isolated spot 6 km from the main city, Vathi. It can house up to 3000 people and is equipped with a rigid system of containment and surveillance, including double barbed wire metal fencing, CCTV throughout, and the 24/7 presence of patrolling police officers and privately contracted security officers.

Residents’ movements in and out of the camp, which are only allowed between 8 am and 8 pm, are subject to [security checks](#), and take place via magnetic gates.

Individuals and families affected by the 17 November decision cannot leave the camp to perform daily chores, attend classes or community activities at the nearby NGO-run “[Alpha land](#)”, or to reach the city centre.

A., an Afghan man from Kabul, staying in the camp with his wife and children, has been in Greece since January 2020. His asylum claim was rejected multiple times and his asylum card withdrawn, leaving him unable to leave the facility. Before being transferred to KEDN, he and his family lived in the “jungle”, a spill-over settlement around the old Samos camp, infamous for its abysmal living conditions.

Speaking from the container where he lives with his family, he told Amnesty International that there is more security in the new camp, but notes: “They have been treating us like prisoners...You really go insane in this place. You can’t go back. You can’t go forward...I cannot really sleep...All the time we are living life with no purpose, with a lot of anxiety.” For the past five days, only his children have been allowed out of the camp to go to school.

H., an Afghan man in Greece since February 2020, whose asylum claim was twice rejected, has not left the camp for five days. Before the 17 November decision, he was active outside the camp: “I was studying English and volunteered outside the camp. In the last five days I feel that I am a prisoner. In the old camp, at least, I had my freedom.”

Amnesty International [repeatedly expressed concerns](#) about Greece’s replacement of open camps with “closed controlled centres”, Questioning how the policy could be reconciled with human rights standards on the deprivation of liberty. Under international and EU law, asylum-seekers should only be detained as a matter of last resort, after a detailed examination of their individual circumstances, for the shortest time possible and under a procedure prescribed by law which allows them to challenge the decision.

The residents of Samos camp are being deprived of their liberty automatically and *en masse*, on untransparent and illegitimate legal grounds, without being able to challenge their confinement, for an indefinite period of time.

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