

Fires in Moria camp leave thousands of vulnerable refugees homeless – what now, EU?

In the early hours of 9 September 2020 several fires destroyed the Moria refugee camp on the Greek island of Lesbos, leaving over 12000 refugees and migrants homeless. – The tragedy in Moria is an unmistakable demonstration of a need for international collaboration to help the world's refugees, says PROTECT's project leader and migration expert, Hakan G. Sicakkan.

According to the UNHCR [the Moria camp was home to some 12000 refugees and migrants](#), including 4000 children and over 400 unaccompanied minors, pregnant women and elderly people.

Greece experts Theofanis Exadaktylos and Evgenia Iliadou stress that the fires bring out the many shortcomings, longer-term problems and insufficient decision-making by the Greek government and the European Union in handling the refugee crisis on Lesbos:

– The current crisis on Lesbos is the outcome of a series of inadequate and patchy political decisions as well as the largely exclusionary, discriminatory and deterrent policies that have been implemented within and beyond the EU's borders.

Exadaktylos and Iliadou point to the hostile turn of European politics as the main reason for Europe's reluctant involvement in Greece's refugee crisis:

– The Greek government has frequently sounded the alarm at the EU-level, but the wave of populism and the surge of the far-right across Europe in the past decade have largely closed the EU's ears and eyes to the problems.

- [Read the Greece experts full blog post on the Moria fires](#)

Do European states possess the collective political will to solve the crisis?

PROTECT's project leader, Hakan G. Sicakkan, points out that Europe lacks necessary collective solutions for handling the refugee crisis in Greece:

– The tragedy in Moria is an unmistakable demonstration of a need for international collaboration to help the world's refugees. Moria is there partly because the states are not properly assuming their responsibility to help refugees, says Sicakkan.

- Also read: [Who is \(un\)protected by the law?](#)

He continues to stress however, that solutions are readily available within the UN's Global Compact on Refugees, which was adopted in 2018:

– The international protection system lacks effective schemes and measures for international collaboration between states. The Global Refugee Compact is devised to compensate for exactly this missing element. It offers institutions and mechanisms for making international collaboration possible even in emergency situations, says Sicakkan.

He points out that if The Global Refugee Compact is put into effective use, the situation in Moria can be eased, but asks:

– Is the political will there?

- [Read more about the Global Compact on Refugees](#)

About the Moria fires and Covid-19 outbreak:

- Following a series of Covid-19 cases in Moria, the whole site has been placed under quarantine restrictions for September. As residents fled the camp seeking alternative refuge, among them the 35 Covid-19 cases, there were concerns about the spread of the virus.
- According to early, yet unconfirmed reports from Lesvos, the fires broke out after scuffles between camp residents who had been found to be Covid-19 positive.
- The overcrowding at Moria meant that control of the quarantine was hard to monitor, including convincing residents to self-isolate, and the facilities have been limited.
- When fires broke out in several areas of the camp, the residents were forced to flee the camp and sleep rough.

About PROTECT

- [PROTECT The Right to International Protection](#) is an international research project funded by the EU's Innovation and Research Program Horizon 2020 with nearly EUR 3.3 million.
- The project studies how the Global Compact on Refugees and Migrants impact the right to international protection in the context of the turbulent political climate surrounding refugee and asylum issues.
- PROTECT consists of [11 partner universities](#) in Europe, South Africa, and Canada
- The project is led from the University of Bergen, Norway, by Professor Hakan G. Sicakkan.

[Contact us](#)