

NGOs release new report on the ‘invisible’ mental health emergency for asylum seekers on Samos

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For immediate release

To mark World Health Day, NGOs have released a new report examining the impact of reception conditions on the mental health of asylum seekers living on Samos island, Greece.

The report, titled ‘Mental health in Samos: the invisible emergency’, argues that asylum seekers face compounded mental health threats arising from how a lack of basic necessities, social exclusion, the Covid-19 pandemic and long asylum procedures impact on the already inherent challenges of displacement.

The report highlights additional challenges faced by marginalised groups, including girls, women and the LGBTQI+ community. “In this context”, says Jude Wiggins, Communications Officer for Glocal Roots, “gender-based violence, harrasment and discrimination are taking a further toll on the mental health of hundreds of individuals and we are shocked at the lack of appropriate support. The absence of care quite simply amounts to systematic neglect. There *must* be intersectional approaches that address the needs of these most vulnerable groups. We urge European leaders to act quickly.”

Drawing on reports written over 3 years, the NGOs evidence just how long this emergency has gone unresolved, and demand prompt action by the Greek and EU authorities to safeguard mental health by providing comprehensive vulnerability screenings, quick transfers, mental health and psychosocial service provision along with dignified living conditions.

“This report comes at a critical time”, says Simone Innico, Advocacy Coordinator at Samos Volunteers. “Just as the EU announced funding for the 5 new reception centres on the Aegean islands, we’re calling on these same authorities to dismantle the hotspot approach and curtail the policies of mass containment that are inevitably the cause of this mental health emergency. We must provide alternative and dignified accommodation structures and substantially and immediately increase efforts to provide psychosocial support, including through integration efforts that promote social inclusion. We must do this to ensure that reception conditions never provoke poor mental health for displaced people.”

Further comments available, contact:

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The Samos Advocacy Collective is a coalition of humanitarian NGOs operating in Samos, Greece, across a range of sectors.