

Greece Fact Sheet

May 2024



Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

Introduction

The Eastern Mediterranean route from Turkey to Greece's eastern borders is one of the most widely traveled refugee pathways in the world. Since 2014, more than 2.5 million people have crossed into the country, fleeing violence and humanitarian crises in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Turkey, and other countries. With this large influx of refugees, access to basic needs is scarce and vulnerable people are not sufficiently protected. Greece hosts more than 150,000 refugees and more than 400,000 asylum seekers. There are more than 3,000 asylum seekers on the island of Lesbos alone.

HIAS Programs and Focus

HIAS protects and supports refugees to build new lives and reunite with family members in safety and freedom. The primary goal of our work in Greece is providing high-quality public legal information and representation to refugees with a focus on those who are most vulnerable, such as survivors of torture or gender-based violence (GBV). With little legal help available for refugees and asylum seekers across Greece, HIAS plays a critical role helping them secure legal status, the first step toward regaining control and stability in their lives.

Legal Protection

Individual Representation and Strategic Litigation

Without legal status, refugees are forced to live on the margins of society, sometimes for generations, without access to healthcare, education, dignified work, or safe shelter. HIAS Greece knows it is essential that refugees receive legal aid to ensure access to asylum procedures and to guide them through steps toward integration and the ability to access social and economic rights.

We advance refugee rights through individual legal representation during asylum and family reunification procedures for asylum seekers (including those in administrative detention), unaccompanied children,



A beneficiary from Syria meets with staff attorney Maria Stergiou at the HIAS office in Mytilini, Lesbos. (Loulou d'Aki/HIAS)

survivors of GBV, and individuals with disabilities. Through its legal and advocacy work, HIAS promotes a more just asylum system and the protection of fundamental human rights for all refugees and asylum seekers in Greece.

Legal Engagement To Prevent and Respond To Discrimination and Xenophobia

Refugees can be wrongfully portrayed as the cause of crime and economic decline. This results in widespread discrimination, including ethnic profiling and xenophobia. HIAS works with coalition partners to stand against xenophobia and to develop and implement advocacy strategies to prevent it. We pursue cases



Legal Protection

We work with the government, UNHCR, and others to empower, educate, and support refugees seeking access to rights.



MHPSS Support

Our programs provide multilayered mental health support.

for refugees who have experienced discrimination or hate crimes, report incidents to the Racist Violence Recording Network, and provide legal advice to victims. In addition, HIAS represents the victims of hate crimes and discrimination in court.

Advocacy, Coordination, and Capacity Building

HIAS Greece utilizes internal expertise as well as national and international experts to provide focused trainings on topics such as basic psychosocial skills, suicide prevention, GBV, and psychological first aid. For HIAS Greece capacity building also entails staff support and supervision support to non-MHPSS professionals who need a safe space to reflect on their work, cultivate resilience, and develop their professional skills sustainably and consistently.

Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS)

Refugees and forcibly displaced people face adversity and extreme stressors, including loss of loved ones, violence, and disruptions to daily life. Following international guidelines, HIAS Greece MHPSS provides tailored individual psychological support from a psychologist and case management by caseworkers to address psychological distress and social needs.

HIAS in Africa and Eurasia

HIAS advocates for the protection of refugees, asylum seekers, other displaced populations, and local host communities in Africa and Eurasia. As part of a comprehensive regional response to meet the urgent needs of these populations, HIAS' programming in the region is focused on protection, gender-based violence prevention and response, mental health and psychosocial support, and economic integration and community engagement.

HIAS currently has programs in three countries in Africa (Chad, Kenya, and South Africa) and six countries in Eurasia (Greece, Israel, Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine). Across the region, HIAS partners with a wide range of government agencies (U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy Human Rights and Labor, U.S. Department of State Bureau for Populations, Refugees and Migration), UN entities (UNHCR, World Health Organization), the private sector (Moderna), and other non-governmental organizations and local partners.

Contact

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