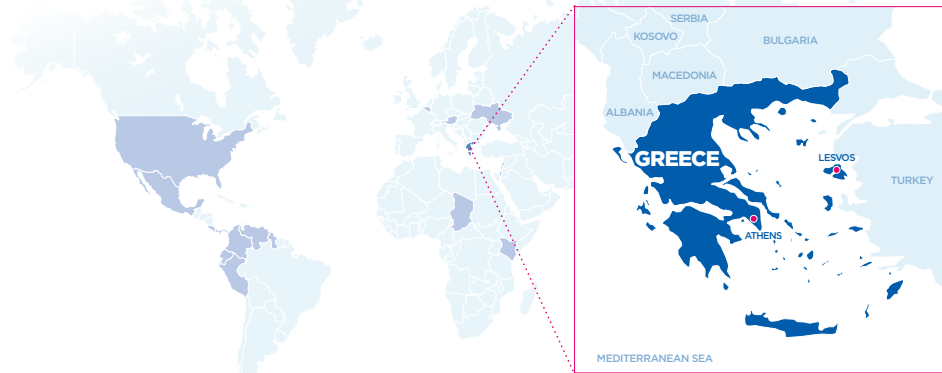




Welcome the stranger.
Protect the refugee.

FACT SHEET: GREECE



HIAS IN GREECE

Founded: 2016

Staff Size: 12

Country Director: Vassilis Kerasiotis

Office Location: Athens, Lesbos

The Eastern Mediterranean route, from Turkey to the Eastern Aegean Greek islands and onto other European countries, is one of the most widely travelled by refugees fleeing violence in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and many other countries across the Middle East, Africa, and Asia. There are close to 25,000 refugees and asylum seekers on the Aegean islands, living in “hotspots” where, due to crowded conditions, access to basic needs is scarce. Greece hosts about 121,000 refugees and migrants, 40 percent of whom are under the age of 18.

The devastating fires in the Moria Reception and Identification Center and COVID-19 have destabilized the lives of refugees and migrants in Greece, cutting off access to income and increasing vulnerability to violence. To respond to their heightened needs, HIAS Greece has modified its services, implementing remote support and developing other innovative solutions. HIAS Greece helps the most vulnerable, including single women, women-headed households, survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), survivors of torture, older people, people with disabilities and serious medical conditions, and LGBTQ refugees.

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 HIAS’s work in Greece is the provision of high quality public legal information and representation to refugees with a focus on those who are most vulnerable, such as children and 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 refugees secure legal status, the first step toward regaining control and stability in their lives.



Photograph taken prior to March, 2020

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 in



order to ensure access to a just asylum procedure, and to guide them through steps toward integration and the ability to access social and economic rights. HIAS Greece advances refugee rights through individual legal representation during asylum and family reunification procedures for asylum seekers (including those in administrative detention), unaccompanied children, survivors of gender-based violence, and individuals with disabilities. HIAS actively participates in strategic litigation to increase refugees' access to social and economic rights and to hold accountable those engaged in hate crimes in local and national courts, the European Court of Human Rights, and other European and international institutions.

Advocacy, Coordination, and Capacity Building

HIAS engages in wide-ranging protection monitoring, advocacy, coordination, and capacity-building activities to advance refugee protection at the policy and practice level. HIAS's advocacy targets include local and national authorities and the European Union. HIAS's strategic partners include refugee community leaders, International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), civil society groups, government agencies, UNHCR, schools, universities, lawyers, and other professionals. These networks and partnerships allow HIAS to lead efforts in policy change in order to advance refugee rights; promote access to asylum; identify cases that would benefit from strategic litigation; refer clients to needed services; and build capacity within the sector. HIAS is working on building the capacity of Greek civil society to incorporate best practices in GBV, mental health, and child appropriate programming into their work with refugees and asylum seekers.

Legal Engagement to Prevent and Respond to Discrimination and Xenophobia

Refugees can be wrongfully portrayed as the cause of crime and economic decline, resulting 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. HIAS pursues cases for refugees who have experienced discrimination or hate crimes, reports incidents to the Racist Violence Recording Network, and provides legal advice to victims. In addition, HIAS represents the victims of hate crimes and discrimination in courts, as a civil party against the perpetrators.

Community-Based Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (CB-MHPSS)

Refugees and forcibly displaced people face adversity and extreme stressors, including loss of loved ones, violence, and disruptions to daily life. HIAS' mental health programs train key community members to recognize acute emotional distress in children and adults as a result of crisis, and how to respond with empathy and respect. In addition to improving the well-being of asylum seekers, such support can make it easier for them to communicate relevant information during asylum procedures. Through HIAS' social worker, who provides multi-layered mental health support, HIAS conducts individual assessments, and provides counseling and/or referrals as needed.

CONTACT

Vassilis Kerasiotis, Country Director • +30 6976671556 • vassilis.kerasiotis@hias.org

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