



# IMPACT REPORT

## LEGAL INTERVENTION PROJECT IN LESVOS



## OUR INTERVENTION - LESVOS -

Since October 2021, in the context of our legal program, DCI Greece have legally supported **157 individuals including single mothers, unaccompanied minors, youth and families.**

Our robust legal intervention includes the below mentioned activities:

### Implemented Activities

- Risk Identification and Vulnerability assessment
- Legal support and representation through individually tailored legal sessions and asylum interview simulations
- Draft personalized legal memos to support the above-mentioned legal actions before the 1st and 2nd degree for each of both procedures (Admissibility and Asylum Eligibility)
  - Delivery of legal information on their rights and procedures
  - Referrals for access to psycho-social support
  - Extensive follow-up case management

In our legal intervention program, we first conduct a preliminary Risk Assessment interview aiming to **assess the risks and needs** of each specific individual. This is followed by the development of an **individually tailored action plan** with the next required steps in order to receive legal documentation and protection adjusted to their particular needs. Preparatory legal **sessions- in the form of an Asylum Simulation-** are conducted before each scheduled asylum interview. In the context of these sessions our beneficiaries are also receiving vital information about their rights and the existing procedures in Greece, as well as, guidance on important matters of concern to them. In the continuity, the draft and submission of individually tailored **legal memos for each one of the stages in the entire asylum process come to complement our intervention in the most meaningful way.** As we approach every case uniquely, we extend our support by trying to cover additional legal needs that might emerge along the process such as: Age Assessment procedures, recognition of SGBV survivors, and victims of torture.

Our Legal Intervention project has become a **key one** on the island of Lesbos, in upholding asylum seekers' human rights, by ensuring their fair and efficient access to the asylum procedures. Referrals are being received by various actors on the island, such as UNHCR and EASO, while the last 3 months we expanded our support to unaccompanied minors arriving on the island, through the referral pathway we developed with IOM Organization which is the responsible actor for one of the safe zones of unaccompanied minors.

## OUR BENEFICIARIES

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-Single women and/or mothers victims of trafficking and FGM survivors

-Young Refugees (18 - 24 years old)

-Unaccompanied Minors

-Vulnerable Families

### Countries of Origin:

Palestine, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cameroon,  
Democratic Republic of Congo



## STRATEGIC AIM & ADVOCACY

The aim of this legal intervention has been the **provision of effective legal support and representation**, as well as, extensive **holistic case management** to the asylum seekers arriving on the island of Lesbos.

In the light of the current policies issued by the Greek Government through the Ministerial Decision aiming to deprive asylum seekers of legal support upon their arrival to Greece and deport them to Turkey in the context of the Safe Third Country concept, our legal project had a very crucial role to play in interrupting these Governmental (and EU's) plans.

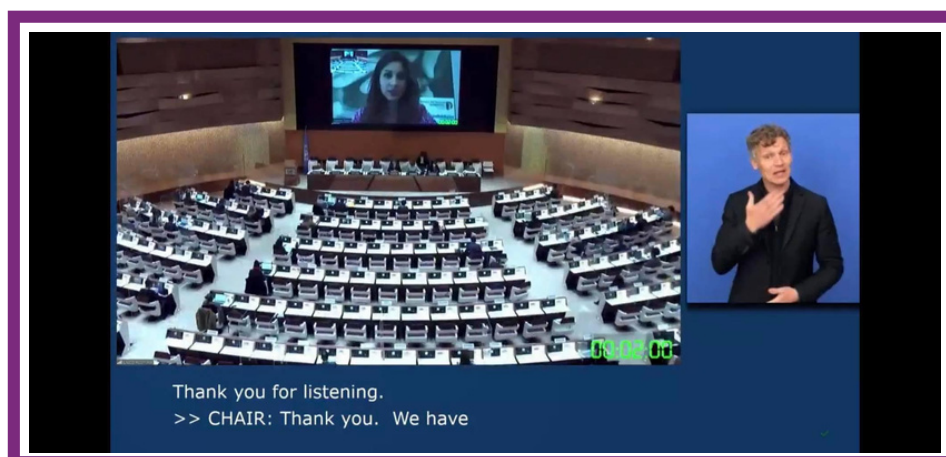
Ensuring access to the new arrivals and taking over their legal representation from the initial stage of the Admissibility (newly set up) procedure are identified as the main elements of our targeted successful intervention. We have already managed to secure positive asylum admissibility results for our beneficiaries and secure them from deportation to Turkey, while we are still fighting on their eligibility asylum claims.

On top of that, the majority of our beneficiaries are characterized as serious SGBV/Trafficking cases and with our intervention, we have managed to initiate a due vulnerability assessment procedure on their merits which will be proven beneficial for their Asylum cases, as well as, their access to psycho-social support.

Another important element of our strategic work is the **advocacy material and the relevant activities** that are planned based on the first-hand information received while operating in the context of legal intervention.

As an example, we have drafted two reports reflecting on the current situation in Greece as a host country for thousands of refugees. On top of that, we have done extensive **advocacy before the UN Human Rights Council and the UN CRC Committee** delivering public statements and submitting legal expert reports. Lastly, we **intervened when Greece was examined under the UN Universal Periodic Review for its compliance with the human rights law** applicable.

We find it crucial to translate our delivery of services into concrete advocacy initiatives targeting a structural change in receiving and responding to the claim of people in need of international protection.



# WHAT ARE THE LEGAL NEEDS OF ASYLUM APPLICANTS IN GREECE - CURRENT CONTEXT -

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## *Lack of Legal Support/Representation of asylum applicants in Greece*

Some of the organizations that were operating on the island of Lesbos decided to move the past 3 months to the Mainland, leaving the remaining asylum seekers and those who continue to arrive, with a lesser chance of accessing services such as legal support and the possibility of being legally represented throughout their Asylum procedures.

## *Ukrainian war and its devastating impact on the refugee population*

One more crucial parameter in the equation is the outbreak of the war in Ukraine which has had a tremendous impact on the treatment of the non-Ukrainian refugee population as one of the secondary categories. This contrast in reception and response of the people fleeing Ukraine and those arriving from other parts of the world mirrors how racism shapes the way Europe is exercising its humanitarian response. While at the same time exceeds the marginalization and deprivation of support the rest of the refugees experience. It is **more urgent than ever** to guarantee that reception policy, legal pathways and delivery of services will be accessible to all people regardless of ethnicity and skin color.





## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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### Single mother from Somalia with 3 children

*"Despite the difficulties, I manage to smile. My girls are finally safe from Female Genital Mutilation. What more could I ask for?"*

When she was a child, due to a compulsory tradition in her culture, she was a victim of FGM twice, despite the fact that her father tried to oppose this practice. Years later, while living in Mogadishu with her husband and her three children, one of the clans that are active in the area invaded their place asking for her husband. She was at home with her children and got brutally beaten up. They beat her, hit her in the face, and stabbed her, while killing her husband. Wanting to save her children she did not have any other option rather than leaving Somalia to protect them.

After a long and dangerous journey, she arrived in Lesvos. From the very beginning, we were surprised by the willpower of this mother who, despite having suffered a lot, her only thought was to protect her children, from the atrocities taking place and the risk of FGM.

She is still struggling daily with her trauma and physical pain, but with the support of DCI-Greece she and her children **received refugee status** in Greece, allowing her, at last, to start a new life. However, this was not a straightforward and simple process. As a person coming from Somalia, she had to undergo an additional, bureaucratic obstacle, the admissibility interview. Refugees from 5 countries (Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bangladesh, and Pakistan) are obliged to undergo this additional step, so as not to be deported back to Turkey and have the right to attend an asylum interview in Greece.

Two legal memos and several asylum interview simulations after, **the positive decision was finally issued**. She is a true example of resilience, capable of overcoming any obstacle to ensure a better future for herself and her children.



## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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Single young woman, Sierra Leone

*“I left my country to save myself and many other young girls' lives. I hope that with me, the evil will stop”*

After her father passed away when she was 11 years old, her mother introduced her to the Buntu society, where she was a leader. While she was still a child, her genitals were amputated, twice. In 2021, her mother died and the young girl was called to fill her position, as a leader. Having experienced such atrocities, and knowing that she didn't want to be responsible for them, she decided to embark on the journey to flee her country.

After our first meeting, an individually tailored plan was organized. A referral was made for psychological and medical support. At the same time, the extensive preparation for her asylum interview started, with multiple sessions taking place.

A legal memo was also submitted to further strengthen her case. Being extremely vulnerable, DCI Greece also took all necessary legal actions for her so as to be transferred to a safe facility on the mainland. Two weeks after, **her geographical restriction was uplifted**, while in April she also received her positive asylum decision.



## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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### Young boy from Palestine

*"I went through all of this for one reason: Freedom"*

Despite his young age, he has never backed down to defend his community and its freedom. While living in Gaza, he was arrested several times by Hamas, and kept in detention, suffering physical violence. His dream to live as a free human being urged him to leave Palestine and seek a safe haven in a European country.

DCI-Greece supported him throughout his asylum case, by preparing him for his asylum interview and submitting a legal memo. A few days later, we were informed about his **positive decision**. As he told us 'This is such a special day for me. Thank you for helping me regain my freedom. Now I can live in safety and peace.'



### Young woman from Guinea

*"I am not alone anymore"*

In Lesvos, the vulnerability of this young woman has been recognized and she was placed in one of the "safe zones" for vulnerable and UAMs present on the island. However, after turning 20 years old, due to the age limit, she had to leave the shelter. Her only option was to live on the streets of Lesvos, which would have meant a higher risk for a young woman in her condition.

DCI-Greece, made it possible to find a long-term accommodation solution for this young woman, providing her with a safe place.





## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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### Young mother from Somalia, survivor of FGM and forced marriage

*“I just wish that me and my son will be safe”*

When she was just a child she was orphaned by both parents and started living with her uncle and his family. Her uncle, following the FGM cultural tradition of Somalia, forced her to undergo this practice twice, once when she was 8 years old and then when she was 11 years old. At the age of 13, she was sold by him to an old man and got married.

After 3 years of constant physical and sexual abuse, she took the decision to leave her country to save herself and her child.

We met both of them a few weeks after their arrival on the island. Coming from Somalia, we had first to receive a positive decision on their admissibility interview, so as their asylum application to be examined by the Greek authorities. Alongside the legal support with the preparation for the interview and the regular follow-ups, DCI-Greece linked her with a gynecologist who specialized in FGM and a psychologist, and her little boy with a pediatrician suited to his needs.

Through our legal intervention, we managed to secure a **positive asylum admissibility result** for them and protect them from deportation to Turkey, at the moment we are working on their eligibility asylum interview.



## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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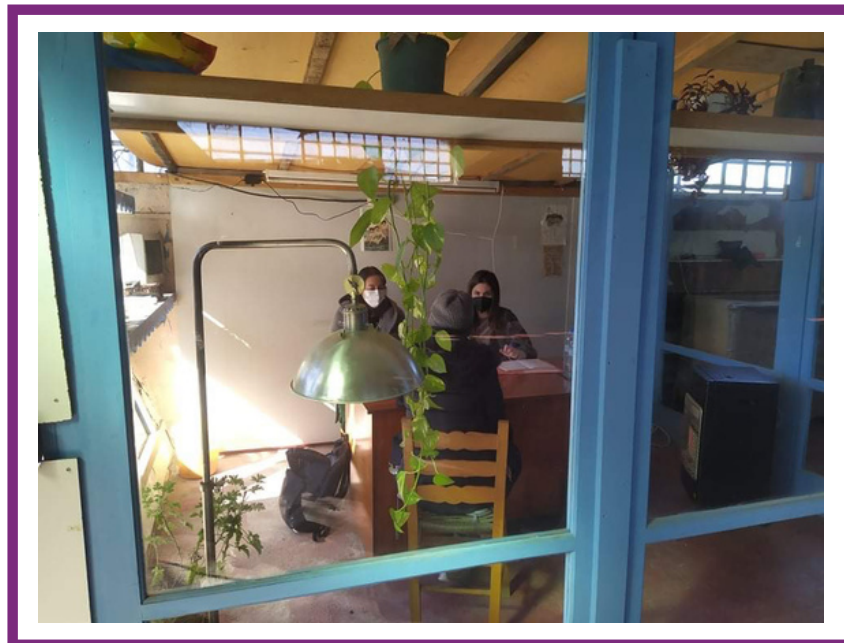
### Single woman from Cameroon, victim of human trafficking

*“I can not recognize the reflection in the mirror. I want my identity back”*

After living on the street, facing multiple risks, and giving birth to her daughter, this woman had to flee her country to escape from her husband's life threats. Throughout her journey, she was sold and bought for sexual exploitation, where her smugglers forced her to change her look and have sex with multiple men.

Once the quarantine ended, our team met her and immediately started preparing her for her asylum interview. At the same time, we linked her with a qualified psychologist, while currently, we are working so as to be legally recognized as a victim of trafficking.

Thanks to the active involvement of DCI-Greece throughout her case, the woman received **a positive decision and Greece recognized her as suitable for international protection.** As she told us 'I cannot believe it that I am finally safe.'



## OUR LEGAL INTERVENTION THROUGH REAL STORIES

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### Family from Afghanistan

*“I would like to thank everyone working in this field. You understand the difficulties and problems and what we have gone through. With your behavior, we understood what humanity means ”*

After the Taliban insurrection, the family who used to work in a humanitarian organization focused on women's rights had to flee Afghanistan to escape the violence enacted by this extremist group. Mother, father, and their two children undertook the turbulent journey to Europe. When they arrived in Turkey, they experienced great institutional violence from the police officers at the borders. The police beat all family members and injured them severely. Moreover, the mother was sexually molested. After their abuse, they were deported back to Iran. It took several tries and more dangers to reenter Turkey, and then Greece. Once they arrived, they spent the first days in the jungle of Lesvos, far from the state radar, because they were afraid they would experience the same violent behavior.

We supported the family in the preparation for their admissibility interview at the asylum office and drafted a legal memo to support their case. Unfortunately, despite the institutional violence, they experienced, and despite the fact that they did not even have the opportunity to ask for asylum in Turkey, their application was rejected in the first degree. This is, unfortunately, a very common strategy that the Greek State is following with Afghan applicants, especially single men and families.

Our team will keep supporting them with the appeal of the decision, whereby extensively preparing them and, once again, submitting a legal report, we will try to overcome this obstacle and turn around the negative decision. We will also provide our aid throughout their next steps as well as when the time for their asylum interview arrives.

At the same time, all family members, that are deeply traumatized by these events, receive specialized medical and psychological support, through our referral pathway, with the hope of finally healing, both physically and mentally.

SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE PROJECT WE HAVE SUPPORTED  
IN TOTAL **108 CASES** WHICH AMOUNT TO **157 INDIVIDUALS**.

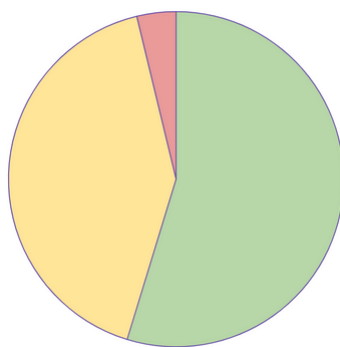
## LESVOS

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In total 157 individuals

From them:

- 125 individuals were supported with their Asylum Applications



● 52 individuals were already granted  
**Refugee Status**

● 68 individuals are still **waiting for  
the decision**

● 5 individuals received a rejection

- **24 individuals** received legal support with their subsequent asylum applications . For these individuals, the results are still pending.

- **8 individuals** received support with access to fair age assessment procedures, safe accommodation and SGBV/Victims of torture recognition

### Countries of Origin:

Palestine, Somalia, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Cameroon