

## Update from ASsIST on the Situation for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Greece

### Key Developments to end July 2025

*The Greek asylum system continues to operate in a way that prioritises deterrence and expediency over protection and fairness. In this context, ASsIST's work—providing clear, multilingual legal information, ensuring people understand their rights, and helping them access procedures—is more essential than ever.*

#### 1. Expansion of Detention and Deportation Measures

**Administrative detention extended:** A draft law proposes increasing the maximum duration of administrative detention from 18 to 24 months. This change—currently under consultation—would further normalise the use of detention as a punitive measure for people whose asylum applications have been rejected or who are deemed inadmissible, regardless of vulnerability or legal recourse.

**Increase in deportations:** Nationals of Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh continue to be disproportionately targeted for return under bilateral agreements. These expulsions often take place without meaningful access to legal advice or a full examination of protection needs.

**Detention without access to legal services:** Individuals are still being detained prior to lodging asylum claims, or without adequate opportunity to appeal negative decisions. In some cases, they are held for weeks or months without knowing their legal status or prospects.

#### 2. Ongoing Barriers to Asylum Registration and Procedures

Individuals receive rejection decisions without ever having had an opportunity to present their case or gather supporting documentation. Glitches, a lack of available slots, and language limitations are preventing even highly vulnerable people from registering claims or submitting appeals.

**Digital exclusion:** The Ministry's online-only appointment system remains inaccessible to many. Frequent technical errors, a severe shortage of appointment times, and the absence of interpretation or multilingual support are preventing even highly vulnerable people from registering their claims or submitting appeals.

#### 3. Barriers to Fair Asylum Procedures

**Delayed registration or no access to the process:** Some asylum seekers are unable to register their claims at all until they receive outside help. Without formal registration, they are excluded from legal protections, shelter, and basic services.

**Short-notice interviews without preparation:** For those who do manage to register, asylum interviews are sometimes scheduled with little or no notice—particularly for applicants presumed to speak English, where no interpreter is assigned. Many do not have time to contact a lawyer, prepare supporting documents, or even learn what their rights are before the interview takes place.

**Limited access to legal aid and case information:** Applicants often struggle to understand or challenge decisions due to lack of information, insufficient interpretation, and the near-total inaccessibility of public legal aid.

**Remote-only procedures continue:** The shift to digital platforms has not been matched by investment in access or interpretation. Many people cannot understand the procedures they are expected to follow, and are excluded by design.

### 3. Worsening Reception and Detention Conditions

**Malakasa RIC:** People are being transferred to Malakasa Reception and Identification Centre, where long delays in registration and asylum interviews are reported. Conditions remain inadequate, especially for families and people with medical needs.

**Amygdaleza Pre-Removal Centre:** Long-term detainees, including rejected asylum seekers and undocumented persons, often remain without updates on their case status. Access to legal aid or interpreters remains sporadic or non-existent.

### 4. Cash Assistance Programme: Delays and Unexplained Exclusion

**Widespread exclusion:** Despite being eligible, many asylum seekers have not received monthly cash assistance for several months. Others report being abruptly removed from the programme with no explanation.

**No accountability:** There is no accessible complaint mechanism. Refugees and asylum seekers often discover that their cards have been deactivated without prior notice or guidance.

**Impact on survival:** The absence of this financial assistance—meant to cover essentials—means that people cannot purchase basic items for hygiene, personal care, or transport. It has deepened distress and left many with no means to meet basic needs.

### 5. Political Landscape and Proposed Legislative Changes

**New Minister, hardline stance:** In June 2025, Thanos Plevris was appointed Minister for Migration and Asylum. His known hardline views suggest a continued policy of restriction and containment. His predecessor resigned amid corruption allegations tied to EU farm subsidies.

**Legislation under review:** The same draft law that expands detention also proposes abolishing humanitarian permits and introducing procedural limitations on appeals—closing off even the limited protection routes that remain.

### 6. Legal Aid Gaps and Community Response

**Legal aid shortages:** Greece's public legal aid system remains inaccessible to many, especially those outside urban centres or in detention. People in need of urgent legal support are routinely left without assistance.

**Language barriers and procedural complexity:** Interpretation remains inconsistent across camps and procedures, making meaningful engagement with legal rights and processes nearly impossible for many.

**Community response stretched thin:** Organisations like ASsIST fill the gap by providing multilingual legal information, support, and referrals. But demand consistently exceeds available resources.

## **Conclusion**

The failure of the asylum system and the measures proposed in the draft bill will deepen exclusion, increase homelessness, and intensify the daily challenges and the suffering for asylum seekers in Greece. These measures can only heighten fear and instability within migrant populations and threaten broader social cohesion. They will not deter people fleeing war, persecution, or climate disasters from seeking safety.

We remain committed to standing with those facing an increasingly hostile system—and we thank our supporters who continue to stand with us.