



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ECtHR CONDEMNS GREECE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AGAINST SEVEN UNACCOMPANIED CHILDREN

- *The events date back to 2020 at the Samos hotspot, where the minors — now all adults — were subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment as well as human rights violations. The Greek government will be required to compensate them for a total of 41.500 Euros;*
- *For the first time, the ECtHR recognized that the living conditions at the RIC Samos at the time constituted inhumane and degrading treatment for any individual, regardless of a specific vulnerability;*
- *“We are pleased that justice has been served for these young people who arrived to Samos as unaccompanied children, but no compensation can undo what they, and thousands of others, have endured”, declared Still I Rise and I Have Rights, the organisations who supported the children.*

OCT 4, 2024 - In the judgements of [T.A. and others](#) and [M.A. and others](#), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) found yesterday that Greece violated the rights of seven unaccompanied children (UAC) by subjecting them to inhuman and degrading treatment in Samos in 2019 and 2020. The case was brought by [I Have Rights](#) and [Still I Rise](#), with the support of [ProAsyl Foundation](#), [UCL PIL Pro Bono Project](#) and [GCN Chambers](#). Greece must now provide compensation to the seven young individuals of 41.500 Euros in total.

“I can’t believe it!” says N.A, who was only 14 at the time. “It’s been so long that I never thought it would really happen. I really, really hope this judgement can make things better for all the people that are now residing in Greece’s camps”.

The seven applicants had fled from war and violence in Syria, Afghanistan, DRC and Cameroon and arrived on Samos at the age of 14 to 17 to apply for asylum. Despite being unaccompanied children, the Greek authorities left them without any material or psychosocial support in the heavily overcrowded Reception and Identification Center (RIC) on Samos. For 6 to 10 months, the children had to fend for themselves in conditions which the former European Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović described as “struggle for survival”.

The associations involved denounced the inhuman situation the UACs lived on the island of Samos, with devastating physical and psychological consequences. The Samos RIC was one of five “hotspots” created on the Greek islands to implement the so-called EU-Turkey Deal. In 2020, over 7.000 people lived in makeshift shelters around the facility, which had an official capacity of 648. The living conditions were characterised by a lack of access to medical care, unprotected exposure to the changing climate, overloaded sanitary facilities, poor food quality, social tensions and



desolate security standards. Within less than a year, four fires destroyed parts of the camp.

“Every day, at our Emergency School on the island, students shared testimonies of unacceptable abuse and violence happening in the Samos hotspot”, said Giulia Cicoli, CFRCO at Still I Rise. “No child, no human being, should ever endure such hardship. Yesterday’s ECtHR ruling acknowledges the suffering inflicted by the Greek authorities and supported by the European Union. This gives our students some justice and, most importantly, an official recognition of the human rights violations they had to endure”.

The children will receive compensation from the Greek government. The judges also awarded an extra amount to one of them because the Greek government ignored an interim measure order from the Court to evacuate the applicant immediately.

Moreover, for the first time, the ECtHR recognized that the living conditions at the RIC Samos at the time constituted inhumane and degrading treatment for any individual, regardless of a specific vulnerability.

Until today, the situation has not substantially improved. In 2021, the closure of Samos RIC and the opening of the new, EU-funded Closed Controlled Access Center (CCAC) has perpetuated new forms of human rights violations. The structural inefficacy in responding to people seeking safety in Europe was once more highlighted in spring 2024, when the ECtHR issued (again) [interim measures in relation to the living conditions in the CCAC](#), ordering the Greek authorities to provide a mother and her child with appropriate accommodation.

“Unaccompanied children are *de facto* detained 24 hours a day in the Samos CCAC,” reports Ella Dodd, Advocacy and Strategy Coordinator at I Have Rights. “For 16 hours a day they are locked in the so-called ‘safe-zone’, a subsection of the facility surrounded by barbed wire. Detaining children to a dehumanising facility cannot be the answer to them seeking safety.”

#####

PRESS CONTACTS

I Have Rights

Ella Dodd, Advocacy and Strategy Coordinator, samos@ihaverights.eu (also for information on the current situation on Samos)

Still I Rise

Vanessa Cappella - Press Office & PR Manager, media@stillirisengo.org | +39 379 2375231

For information on the proceedings

Philipp Schönberger, p.schoenberger@posteo.de, +49 1578 7811243