



January, 31th, 2017

Report on the Situation in the Reception & Identification Center of Moria Lesvos

In the ten months following the implementation day of the Joint E.U. – Turkey Statement the anguish from the loss of 5 fellow human beings hangs still heavy in everyone’s heart.

A few months ago five persons began a long journey toward Europe, toward liberty and security with hopes for a better tomorrow. However, they never made it to their destination. In November two people lost their lives after the explosion of a container of gas, whilst for those killed in the month of January the cause of death is yet to be determined. The connection between these tragic incidents and the current living conditions at the Reception and Identification Centre cannot but be inevitable.

During the past months Doctors of the World had repeatedly and publicly urged upon the dangers resulting from people residing in accommodation centers where the necessary conditions for safe and decent living are not satisfied, underlying in the same time that these conditions are non-negotiable and their satisfaction should forego the preservation of any agreement regarding the Refugee crisis.

Ten months after the day of the implementation of the Joint E.E. – Turkey Statement (March 20, 2016) and the general feeling of insecurity, uncertainty and agony that has been spread among Third Country Nationals (TCN), trapped in Lesvos and therefore in Greece, has reached even more negative dimensions taking into account the system’s inability to take the necessary measures for sufficiently protecting them on every level.

Images of tents covered in snow at the RIC, where many are forced not only to reside but essentially to survive, travelled around the world justifying in the worst possible way the concerns that our Organization has long expressed and urged upon.

So, making emergency decisions under pressure instead of taking prevention and protection measures results ultimately in selecting temporary, fragmentary and not-integrated solutions.

Under these circumstances we see the formation of a framework regarding the implementation of procedures examining international protection requests. The progress of these requests is associated now with the possibility of immediate transfer of TCN applicants

to safer accommodation in the mainland, provided that the positive outcome of their cases allows it.

It concerns recognized by the Asylum Service and EASO's supporting mechanism, a) vulnerable groups, b) TCN integrated in the Dublin category, c) applicants whose admissibility of request has been approved and are included in the regular examination procedure, d) cases of TCN whose transportation to the mainland is deemed necessary for medical reasons (these cases are attested exclusively by a Public Hospital).

For the rest of the population groups the possibility of choice concerning the accommodation in structures outside the RIC, where living conditions are comparatively better, was given at the end of the month.

Taking into account the aforementioned essential parameters and focusing on the depiction and analysis of the current situation at the Reception and Identification Centre in Moria for the month of January (2017), the following conclusions can be drawn.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Due to the significant, and anticipated, deterioration of the weather conditions, TCN were hastily moved, in two stages, to open accommodation centers operating both on the island of Lesbos and on similar centers in the mainland.

More specifically, since January 9th 2017 and until the end of the month, 176 TCN were moved out of the Centre, whilst 269 TCN were moved to Kara Tepe (open camp) and 310 TCN to the mainland (30 TCN from Moria, 73 TCN from the Identification Centre and 207 from hotels)

Families, as well as vulnerable groups of the population from Moria (283 TCN) and Kara Tepe's camp (198 TCN), were temporarily transferred to the island's hotels.

According to the Authorities' plan those people have the right documents enabling them to travel to the mainland when places are found in the camps and structures of the mainland. Moreover, approximately 170 persons (single men) were transferred to the naval ship¹ "Lesvos" which was anchored at Lesbos port, in the context of emergency measures taken by the Authorities in order to deal with the crisis.

Significant were also the internal transportation (inside the Centre) where people living in tents, including vulnerable groups, were moved to accommodation with better insulation.

In accordance with the data from the Greek Police 3.548 persons reside in Moria and 818 TCN in the Identification Centre.

¹ The medical team of Doctors of the World is on board since 17/01/2017 providing medical services

Apart from the above quantitative data, qualitative data continue to depict ignorance, agony, insecurity, fear, despair, feelings connected mainly with the asylum procedures, as well as the need to live or even survive, in a Center which has long since come to its limit of acceptable living conditions.

Phenomena of mass protests requesting asylum and opening of the borders have been substantially limited. However, pent-up tension and the difficulty to adjust in the current living conditions continue to show up through aggressive, and sometimes self-destructive, behaviours such as self-harming and suicide attempts. The rise of such incidents sparks concern as to the available measures to overcome them, both in terms of prevention and management.

Taking all of the above under consideration, as well as the fact that the Center is still overpopulated, vulnerable groups included, the extent of the challenges concerning the provision of supporting services in every field becomes quite clear.

More detailed information follows on the various -basic- sectors of the daily function of the Center:

ACCOMMODATION

The inability to provide effective protection from weather conditions, in particular regarding the need to replace the tents with better insulated accommodation, and the lack of radiators caused serious problems and asked for a solution from the competent Authorities, as they are linked directly to the health of the residing TCN.

December's report mentions that: *"The scenario of replacement of tents and shelters – always exposed to the season's extreme weather conditions – with containers, which will of course be better insulated, offer protection, security, and privacy, is one more plan locked in a drawer left to dust"*. January's snowfalls resulted in tents covered in snow, which in turn proved once again the inability to take necessary measures in order to make ideas into actions for the effective protection of the population.

Despite the emergency visit ²(18/1/2017) of the Immigration Commissioner, Mr. Avramopoulos, the Director of the Department of Humanitarian Crisis of European Commission, Mr. Philip De Broers, the Coordinator for the implementation of the Joint E.U. – Turkey Statement, Mr. Maarten Verwey and the Minister for Immigration Policy, Mr.

² The inside of Moria Center was not included in the visit.

Mouzalas, in Lesvos, in order to find immediate solutions, TCN continued to reside the following days in tents, makeshift shelters, but also cramped in tiny spaces.

It should be clear by now that despite the individual actions for the improvement of the accommodation conditions, such as placing a fourth heated rub hall, insulating the tents with a material used in constructions, construction work in the northern part of the Centre for ground smoothing in order to place stable accommodation, or increasing the capacity of the accommodation centers utilizing existing containers, will not have the desired results, if in the same time the reinstatement of the Centre's operation at the specified capacity is not guaranteed through its decongestion.

WASH

The difficulties in maintaining basic hygiene standards remain given the lack of hot water is a major problem in many installations of the Center, as well as the disproportionate ratio of infrastructures and beneficiaries.

The clean-up in common areas, especially in toilets, can be improved.

There are constant efforts made to maintain and improve of the relevant infrastructures by organisations and actors at a local level.

SITE PLANNING

The installation of a fourth rub hall aims possibly at securing the precondition so as to move ahead with the long awaited process of installation of containers, given that in order for this to be implemented it is necessary to remove the tents and by extension the temporary hosting of the TCNs to another spot, in order for large scale technical works to take place such as to smooth the soil, heavy goods vehicles works etc.

The danger stemming from the intervention of the TCNs in the cabling of the Center so as to secure electricity, that is lighting and heating for their tents, has decreased yet it has not disappeared.

FOOD

As far as food is concerned, the Army, via a private catering company continues to cover the biggest part of the needs in alimentation, distributing daily more than 2.500 portions. Complementary portions are prepared and distributed by NGOs.

The continued efforts continue for securing a special diet, when needed, have been intensified.

It is reminded that during the last 10 months: a) There is no provision for “home” storage/maintenance for food and beverages and b) baby milk in powder (for infants that do not breastfeed) is provided only by MDM in the context of a regular cooperation with the International Organization “Save the Children”.

NFI’s – NON FOOD ITEMS

The basic distribution of winterization items for clothing and footwear is ongoing in order for the beneficiaries to face the extremely negative weather conditions.

For offering a better service of the TCNs an effort to organize two parallel systems of distribution of NFIs by the NGOs involved is underway. One system is planned to meet the needs of the newcomers and another the distribution to the stable population.

The MDM team in the context of collaboration with the Reception and Identification Service but also with own means, offers human, economic and other resources, at the same time fostering collaborations and the maintenance of the necessary coordination amongst Organisations so as to avoid overlappings as well as gaps in covering the basic needs.

The average number of beneficiaries that collects NFIs from the point of distribution of the MDM team on a daily basis during January reached that of 150.

PROTECTION

As far as protection is concerned, the actions have been prioritized in accordance with the need of immediate transfer of TCNs to Structures that offer safer hosting conditions in comparison with the existing living conditions in the RIC.

Apart from the serious gaps in the living conditions (shelter, privacy, hygiene, security, electricity, heating, hot water etc.) and the overconcentration of population (risk-bearing public health, security etc) where issues concerning international protection remain information, agony and fear before the visible danger of readmission or deportation.

More particularly, as far as the actions of protection are concerned, the use of hosting facilities of unaccompanied minors, who have by now been transferred to open facilities that operate in Lesvos and the reconstruction of the section that aims to host vulnerable group and families, is an important step towards a positive direction.

MENTAL HEALTH & PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT (MHPSS)

At a psychosocial level, empowering TCNs as far as handling and dealing with acute symptoms, such as panic attacks, cases of self-inflicting harms and extreme behaviors, were increased significantly not only due to the insecurity and despair caused by the status of uncertainty but also due to the tragic events that took place in the last period.

The appearance or deterioration of an existing psychopathology, in combination mainly to the bad living conditions, the sentimental burden that the loss of fellow men and the long-lasting procedures of examining petitions for international protection cause, leads in most cases to a complete expression of symptoms.

More particularly, the basic psychological disorders of the TCNs are stress disorders, sentimental disorders, sleep disorders, post traumatic stress, disorders connected with the use of psychoactive substances etc., which when not treated at an initial stage through diagnosis and therapy (pharmaceutical treatment and/or hospitalization), can cause an important blow in the psychological and physical health of the patients.

Given that the General Hospital of Mytilene Vostaneio only has one Psychiatrist, does not have a child psychiatrist on a permanent basis and the appointments are scheduled from now on for the summer of 2017, the problem acquires worrying dimensions, since the relevant needs cannot be dealt with on time and efficiently from the National Health Security System.

Taking all the above into consideration, the psychologists and doctors of the team of MDM are called to handle psychiatric cases with the minimum means possible, since it is not possible to prescribe medicines by a psychiatrist and by extension the necessary pharmaceutical treatment is not guaranteed and they refer the psychiatric emergencies to the Psychiatrist of the General Hospital.

The issue of the understaffing of the Psychiatric Department of the G.H. as far as the specialties of Psychiatrist and Child Psychiatrist is concerned is deemed of high and vital importance on the one hand for the psychological and physical integrity of the patients and on the other hand for the safeguarding of public health and security.

The primary health care offered by the MDM team continues to be instrumental for the support of the TCNs and the best possible decongestion of the National Health System at a local level (G.H., PEDY Clinic, EKAB)

More in detail the MDM team during January offered

- a) Services for primary dental care
- b) Services to pregnant women as a target group, through a programme of free prenatal control in line with the Guidelines of the national context and is combined with
- c) services by a (female) gynecologist inside the Center
- d) mass anti-flu vaccination to high risk groups, in compliance with the National Vaccination Programme and in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (General Directorate of Public Health).
- e) Information services to the personnel of the RIC in relation to the Directive of the Health Ministry for the "Vaccination of adults that work in Hosting Facilities of Refugees-Immigrants".

At the same time, the team issued an implementation proposal for the Information / Sensitization campaign for TCNs, as far as the prevention and treatment of the Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) taking into consideration the increase of cases that have been infected by the HIV and Hepatitis viruses.

The medical and psychosocial examination as well as the identification of vulnerability, according to the foreseen system of registration of the newcomers from the RIC, in the context of collaboration with the Reception And Identification Service continues to be a procedure with a high degree of difficulty at a quantitative and qualitative level, given that it is taking place in conditions of high pressure.

The educators of the MDM team, in close collaboration with the representatives of the Ministry of Education at the RIC, run a class for young students, as well as classes for advanced teenagers and adults. In addition, two beginners' classes have been created for adults, with students increasing daily, since the demand for participation is high. Finally, a class for teenagers who want to follow the national education system in the mainland has been created, with the aim of supporting and preparing them for the relevant exams.

ADVOCACY

The MDM team remains loyal to the dual commitment of the Organization:

a) to remain in the refugee center of Moria, despite its transformation into a closed Center (due to the implementation of the joint EU–Turkey statement) in order to provide medical and psychosocial support to refugees whose health was at direct risk and

b) to report, monitor and document any incident affecting directly or indirectly the human rights of refugees,

This commitment has resulted during January in

- A Press Release entitled “The winter has arrived. Have we really done all we could?”, so as to highlight the stakes of the living conditions of the TCNs in the islands, with a special reference to the Moria RIC on 10/01/2017.
- A Press Release entitled “‘How many people have to die before we stop talking about ‘random and exceptional incidents’?’ on 30/01/2017.
- Press conferences in order to inform/sensitize the public opinion on the dangers of the TCNs living in non-secure conditions. Indicatively we mention the following interviews which were given before the three tragic deaths that took place on 24, 28 and 30 January 2017:
 - Daily “Ethnos”, 10/01/2017
 - Radio “Parapolitika”, 11/01/2017
 - E-Press “i-efimerida”, 20/01/2017

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