

# Europe Refugee Crisis

Emergency humanitarian assistance provided to refugees arriving on the Greek Island of Lesbos. A joint initiative by The World Federation of KSIMC and the Council of European Jamaats (CoEJ).

Report prepared:

**OCTOBER 2015**



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THE  
WORLD  
FEDERATION  
OF KHOJA SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES



# EUROPE REFUGEE CRISIS I REPORT

## OVERVIEW

As of October 2015, over 705,000 refugees have fled to Europe on unseaworthy boats and dinghies across the Mediterranean Sea. More than 3,200 refugees have died or are missing. These people are fleeing war, violence and persecution in their countries of origin. Europe is suffering from the worst refugee crisis since World War II.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the top three nationalities of the Mediterranean Sea arrivals since the beginning of the year are Syrian (53%), Afghan (16%) and Eritrean (6%).



**Above: A snapshot of the journey of refugees and migrants across Europe.**

Of the 705,000 refugees who have arrived in Europe, 562,355 have landed in Greece alone, where 70% are Syrian, 18% are Afghan and 4% are Iraqi. We estimate that at least 75% of the Afghan and Iraqi refugees are Shia Muslims.

The Greek Islands of Lesbos, Chios, Samos, Leros, Kalymnos, Kos, Rhodes, and Symi have seen a large influx of people arriving by boat, putting a great deal of pressure on the land, the locals, the economy and the environment. They left their homes with only what they were wearing with the hopes that they would be welcomed with open arms. However, upon landing on the shores of Europe, these families are quickly learning that their hardships are far from over.

As families disembark their boats, they need food, clean water, dry clothes, sanitation facilities and so much more. They need moral support, guidance, compassion and an understanding heart as they come to a new land. Whilst there are some individuals and organisations in Greece providing these needs to the people, much more needs to be done at a greater level to better manage this refugee crisis and find smart solutions to resolve this global situation.



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### THE WORLD FEDERATION AND COEJ PARTNER IN RESPONSE TO THE EUROPE REFUGEE CRISIS

In September 2015, The World Federation and the Council of European Jamaats (CoEJ) partnered and established The EUROPE REFUGEE CRISIS APPEAL to raise funds to deliver urgently needed humanitarian aid to the thousands of refugees seeking asylum in Europe.

Through consultation with different organisations and individuals, our needs assessment indicated the value added potential of The World Federation and CoEJ to be high in Lesvos, Greece. We learned that among the pressing areas of need on this island was to distribute aid products which would include useful items that would provide comfort and ease for the refugees.

The World Federation and CoEJ developed a plan to mobilize a group of volunteers and lead a humanitarian mission to Lesvos to:

1. Assist the UNHCR & IRC refugee registration process by:
  - (a) Guiding the refugees to them
  - (b) Assisting with communication services
  - (c) Informing refugees of the benefits of registration
2. Make refugees aware of the challenges ahead in their journey
3. Provide refugees with 4 different aid products to make their stay in Lesvos easier

A group of 10 volunteers travelled to Lesvos from 3rd to 10th October 2015 to meet The World Federation's team coordinator who arrived on the Island on 26th September 2015. Upon his arrival into Lesvos, the team leader scouted the operations on the island, and determined Skala Sykaminia to be the area where we could add the most value.



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### LESVOS, GREECE: UNDERSTANDING THE ISLAND

In Lesvos, our team worked in the port village of Skala Sikaminas. The beach here is a key area with the greatest need as it is the closest point to Turkey and many boats land here as an entry point for the refugees to enter Europe.

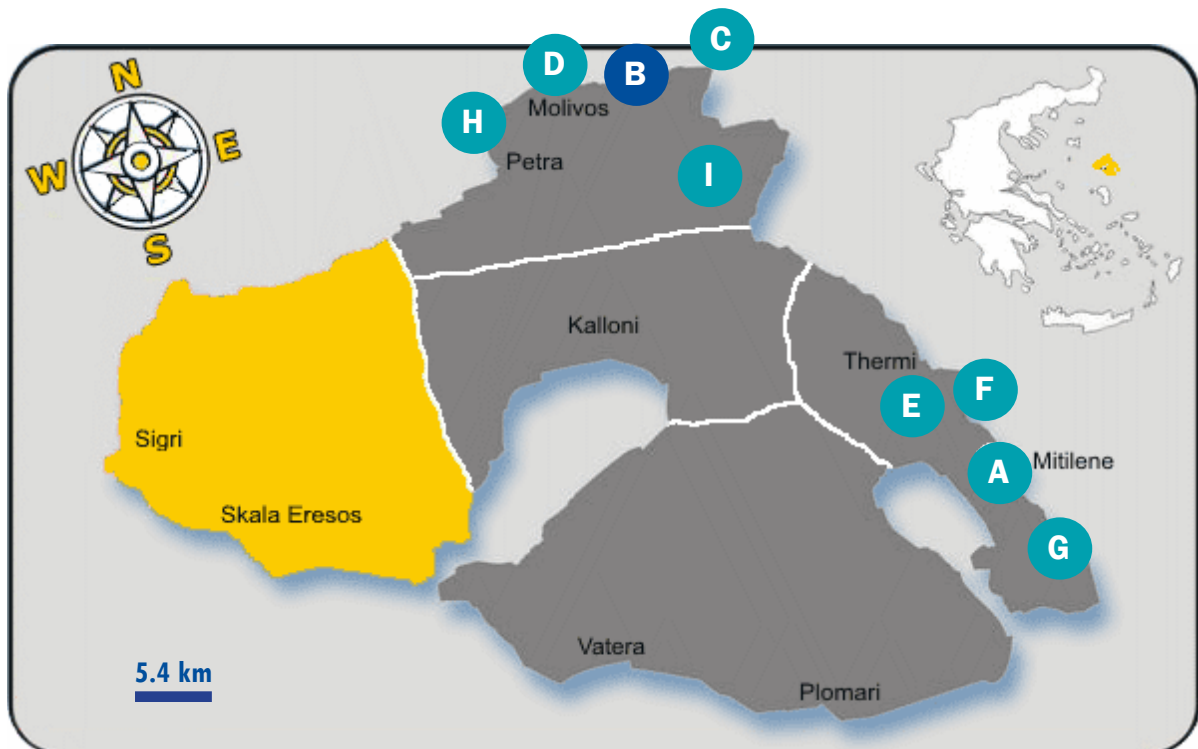
The aim of all inbound refugees is to first reach Mitilene, the capital city of Lesvos by way of registration points. However, reaching Mitilene as quickly as they would like is not always possible, so volunteers guide the refugees to use overnight stays in the temporary shelters set up in the towns of Oxy and Mantamados, especially when late arrivals come to the Island.



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The key challenges in Lesvos (in order of severity) include:

1. Lack of coordination
2. Lack of protection
3. Lack of understanding among aid workers
4. Lack of cooperation
5. Transportation



**A** **Mitilene**  
(airport & main City)

**B** **Skala Sikaminias**  
- where we worked;  
where many boats  
arrive with refugees

**C** **Lighthouse of Cape Korakas** - worst place for boats to land

**D** **Eftalou** - where we stayed

**E** **Moria** - registration for non-Syrians

**F** **Karatepe** - registration for Syrians

**G** **Pikpa** - for vulnerable & disabled refugees

**H** **Oxy** - bus station & overnight stay

**I** **Mantamados** - bus station & overnight stay

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### OUR WORK IN SKALA SIKAMINIAS

The Lesvos Team Leader travelled to Lesvos one week before the 10 volunteers were scheduled to arrive. He made his way to Skala Sikaminias where he and other local volunteers scouted the beach area for 2 days and realised the gravity of the situation here. The team leader reported:

*“Due to the high turnover of volunteers who come to this island and the continuous arrival of boats (regardless of the time of day), we realised that this was the point of greatest need where we could add the most value by coordinating help and guidance for the incoming refugees.”*



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One week later, when the 10 members of the Lesvos Volunteer Team arrived, they worked with other aid workers on the island to form a new working group which included short and long term volunteers and local organisations. The goal of this new group was to work together to develop and apply a better system of coordinating aid and relief efforts in this area.

One of the key achievements of our volunteer team was creating an orderly process for refugees to travel the 6 km route from the coast to the bus station. Overall, the results of their efforts were positive where by the end of their stay, they managed to ensure that this beach not only had a sustainable site for welcoming refugees, but also ensured UNHCR had the faith in the local coordination formed to fund and establish a much more sustainable site.



#### Achievements in Coordination & Cooperation:

1. Scouted and learned needs of this coastline and bus station operation to work with other organisations to apply systems and structures of effective management;
2. Distributed aid to refugees as they arrived on the island;
3. Assisted in implementing protection mechanisms around the bus station, to ensure the safety of the refugees (especially when there are many of them waiting for the buses);
4. Worked with all organisations to form a structure of support to assist refugees around the clock; our volunteers worked in shifts to make sure that a group of volunteers from our team was always on the ground supporting the refugees and volunteers from other agencies.

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### DISTRIBUTION OF AID PRODUCTS

4 different aid products were gifted to refugees across various locations in Lesvos. These items included:

1. **Peepoople Biodegradable Toilet Solutions** - about 15 toilets were set up by our team using Peepoople in the Northern part of the Island for incoming refugees to use;
2. **Water Purification Tablets** - used in camps located in the Southern part of the island in Moria and Pikpa to provide clean water from rusted pipes;
3. **High Energy Biscuits** - distributed in Skala to provide people with energy as they arrived;
4. **Sleeping Bags** - 100 were distributed in Skala and the rest are being used in camps in Moria and Karatepe.



### EUROPE REFUGEE CRISIS - TRIP TO LESVOS (SUMMARY OF EXPENSES)

DESCRIPTION	TOTAL (GBP)
<b>Purchase &amp; Distribution of Aid Products</b> - Peepoople Biodegradable Toilet Solutions, water purification tablets, high energy biscuits, sleeping bags	£13,300
<b>Emergency Food Aid</b> - 300 hot meals served to refugees in Lesvos	£1,035
<b>In-Island Transportation</b> - for Lesvos Team Volunteers, to deliver aid products, and to transport refugees from Skala Beach to bus station	£1,110
<b>Accommodation &amp; Food</b> - provided for Lesvos Team Volunteers	£2,300
<b>Media &amp; Communication</b>	£885
<b>TOTAL COST</b>	<b>£18,630</b>

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### VOLUNTEERS

Our volunteers were the backbone of this humanitarian trip to Lesvos and The World Federation and CoEJ extend their heartfelt appreciation to the 10 individuals who graciously offered their time, skills and resources to travel to Greece to provide vital support as part of our mission.

Our team in lesvos comprised 10 volunteers (who came from various parts of Europe) and one staff person from The World Federation who coordinated the trip and led the team on the ground. Each of the volunteers brought with them special skills, ethos and values that would be instrumental in the mission. These individuals were compassionate, strong, flexible, hard working, were able to manage difficult situations, had strong people skills and were able to adapt to their changing environment whilst in Lesvos.

Our Lesvos Volunteer Team included:

- **Aliya Abidi**
- **Habib Andani**
- **Shakir Ibrahim**
- **Fatimah Jessa**
- **Richad Mamod Nourah**
- **Nikhath Panjwani**
- **Hussein Rahemtulla**
- **Shakir Rahemtulla**
- **Asad Rashid**
- **Dr Naushad Suleman**



*“Our volunteers were exposed to working conditions on the beach, and at the bus station. In each stressful situation they coped remarkably well. They also got a chance to see the registration centres of Karatepe & Moria. All in all the experience for our volunteers was an invaluable one, and each one of them left with a sense of wanting to do more and they understood the value added by the work done by The World Federation of KSIMC in partnership with CoEJ.” (Team Leader)*

#### Lesvos Team - ‘Code of Conduct’

The Lesvos Volunteer Team followed a set of rules outlining responsibilities and proper practices to ensure that individuals reflected the values of The World Federation and CoEJ in the work they had set out to do in Greece. Our volunteers are ambassadors not only of our organisations, but also of our faith and the following ‘Code of Conduct’ was established:

1. Do no harm
2. Respect the human dignity of all persons
3. Treat all persons with respect
4. Treat your environment and host country with respect; pay attention to littering and conduct
5. Respect the privacy of all persons
6. Be religiously and culturally aware
7. Be impartial and non-judgmental at all times
8. Be responsible and diligent
9. Communicate calmly, clearly and in a way that instills trust
10. Exercise patience with fellow volunteers
11. Know your own limitations
12. Be patient



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### A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT OUR VOLUNTEERS EXPERIENCED IN LESVOS

- “The families we met at the lighthouse had gone through a tough time where they spent their entire life savings and gave whatever they had to a greedy human trafficker that took advantage of their desperation. When I spoke to the men, they told me that they paid USD \$1,200 per head to secure a place on the dinghy.”



- “Our team of volunteers is working alongside other volunteers belonging to different organisations who have also come to Lesvos to help the refugees. Together, we greet the men, women and children as they come ashore. We make sure they are suited in clean, dry clothes and fed before directing them to the bus station which is 3 kilometers away. It is at the bus station where families travelling on different boats are reunited; though sadly many have lost their family members on the journey or due to the horrors of the country from which they are fleeing from.”



- “To help address this urgent sanitation need for the incoming refugees, our volunteers implemented Peepoole toilets which are portable using biodegradable bags and so could easily be collected and disposed of and would eventually breakdown into compost. A demonstration was provided to the refugees on how to use the bags and dispose of them. This was our response to creating a sustainable solution to the sanitation problem at hand.”



- “There are many types of refugees we meet who make an impression on us. One such person is an elderly man who stumbles and collapses due to grief and exhaustion. He lost many members of his family in a horrific manner that he cannot speak of without emotion overwhelming him. There are widows and orphans, elderly and the sick whose lives have been shattered. They have seen horrifying things, yet they all have a firm resolve and hope for tomorrow. They all utter the words of gratitude to God and many whisper prayers – some silently, some loudly. Together, they make their faith their courage and a source of strength.”





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### *Thank You*

Our humanitarian mission to Greece was all about extending help to the masses of refugees seeking asylum from a life of persecution and violence.

Imam Husayn (as) said: *“Indeed, the opportunity to be able to fulfil the needs of people is amongst God’s blessings to you, so do not be resentful for these blessings.”*

Thank you for supporting the **Europe Refugee Crisis Appeal**.