

THE SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF FORCED MIGRATION

A Multi-Media Educational Tool

Summer 2020

COVID-19 and Migration Detention in Greece: July 2020

Target audience: high school (grades 9-12)

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Greece is the doorway to Europe for refugees and forced migrants from the Middle East and Africa and the COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the country and migrants there. Europe has received numerous migrants and the situation has escalated with the outbreaks of the Syrian crisis in 2011 and the conflicts in Africa in the 2010s. Especially, thousands of refugees have crossed the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece and arrived on its islands. Greece, along with Europe, has implemented several policies to regulate the number of migrants, such as the EU-Turkey agreement, the Dublin regulation, and Frontex.

- Will Jones et al, "[Europe's Refugee Crisis : Pressure Points and Solutions,](#)" *American Enterprise Institute*, 2017; "[Greece,](#)" *Rescue.org*, accessed Jul. 20, 2020.

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic in February 2020, Turkey announced that it would open its borders to Greece, breaking the 2016 EU-Turkey agreement, which had asked Turkey to contain refugees within the country and prevent them from arriving in the EU, in exchange for negotiations on Turkey's accession to the EU. Turkey mentioned the lack of support from the EU for refugees in Turkey as the reason why Turkey opened its border with Greece. However, it is said that the true reason is Turkey demanding support for its military action in Syria against the regime and its ally Russia. As a result, thousands of migrants amassed at the border between Turkey and Greece.

- Helena Smith et al, "[Erdogan says border will stay open as Greece tries to repel influx,](#)" *The Guardian*, February 29, 2020.

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With the collapse of the EU-Turkey agreement and the COVID-19 pandemic, Greece has closed its border to several countries including Turkey and tightened its border controls.

- [“Coronavirus: Travel restrictions, border shutdowns by country,”](#) Al Jazeera, Jun. 3, 2020; [“Greece to tighten border controls to prevent spread of coronavirus,”](#) Greek City Times, Feb. 28, 2020.

Greece deployed military and police forces at its border and the number of Frontex officers has increased, in order to prevent undocumented migrants.

- [Matina Stevis-Gridneff, “Greece Suspends Asylum as Turkey Opens Gates for Migrants,”](#) *The New York Times*, March 1, 2020
- [“Frontex launches rapid border intervention on Greek land border,”](#) *FRONTEX*, March 13, 2020
- [“Member States continue to support Frontex operations in Greece,”](#) *FRONTEX*, April 3, 2020.

Greece has also suspended the asylum seeking process from March to June in order to prevent the spread of the virus. The collapse of the EU-Turkey agreement and the COVID-19 pandemic simultaneously deprived the migrants of their right to seek asylum.

- [Stevis-Gridneff, “Greece Suspends Asylum as Turkey Opens Gates for Migrants.”](#)

The influence has also arrived at migrants living in Greece. In May, about 20 cases of COVID-19 were found for the first time in the Ritsona camp near Athens.

- [Greece Records First Coronavirus Cases Among Refugees, Imposes Quarantine on Camp,”](#) *NPR*, April 2, 2020.

Continuing from this, hundreds of cases among refugees have been reported and the number may grow as the refugee camps are overcrowded and unsanitary.

- [“Refugee camp in northern Greece quarantined after Covid-19 infection,”](#) *Ekathimerini*, April 6, 2020.

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The number of refugees far exceeds the camps' capacities, and the sanitation facilities are limited (ex. one toilet and shower for hundreds of migrants).

- ["Refugee camp in northern Greece quarantined after Covid-19 infection," Ekathimerini](#)
- ["Greek islands migrant camps 'not prepared for Covid-19': Human Rights Watch," Euronews, April 22, 2020.](#)

In response to this situation, Greek authorities have taken several measures, which have taken away the rights and dignity from refugees. Firstly, the government imposed a lockdown on the refugee camps, which prevented migrants from going out to the town and legal workers to come to the camps, and made the legal aids for migrants to seek asylum out of their hands.

- ["Greece extends coronavirus lockdown at refugee camps," Aljazeera, May 11, 2020](#)
- ["Refugee camp in northern Greece quarantined after Covid-19 infection," Ekathimerini, Apr. 6, 2020; Katy Fallon](#)
- ["Greece ready to welcome tourists as refugees stay locked down in Lesbos," The Guardian, May 27, 2020.](#)

Greek authorities also attempted to decongest the camps on the Aegean islands by transferring people from the islands to mainland detention centers, thereby displacing the people who had been placed in mainland detention prior to COVID-19. Magda Panoutsopoulou.

- ["Greece to evict over 10,000 refugees from shelters," Anadolu Agency, May 29, 2020](#)

Due to this decree, asylum seekers located in detention centers have to leave detention centers, their temporary residence, and become homeless. However, there is some cause for hope based on recent reports. For example, in order to improve overcrowded and unsanitary migrants' living conditions in camps and detention centers, and protect vulnerable migrants under the COVID-19 pandemic, EU countries (Germany, Luxembourg, and Switzerland) are accepting relocation of vulnerable migrants, such as unaccompanied migrant children, from Greece.

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- ["Greece relocates unaccompanied migrant children to Luxembourg," BBC, April 15, 2020](#)
- ["Swiss take in young refugees from Greek island camps," Swissinfo, May 16, 2020](#)
- ["Germany takes in Afghan, Syrian refugee children from Greek camp," Deutsche Welle, April 18, 2020](#)
- ["Germany to take another 249 refugee children from Greece," Greek City Times, June 11, 2020.](#)

UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are also relocating migrants from overcrowded camps to mainland apartments, hotels, and other camps.

- ["Greece to move more than 2,300 'COVID-19 vulnerable' migrants," Infomigrants, Apr. 17, 2020.](#)

The situation is continuously changing, and it must not be forgotten that it is not only you, but forced migrants as well who are negatively impacted by the worldwide pandemic. Familiarize yourself more with what is happening to forced migrants in Greece during the COVID-19 pandemic through the materials below.

Recommended Bibliography to Learn More

- ["Greece," Rescue.org](#)
- Ali Cain, ["A Fresh Start in EU Migration Policy: Re-examining the Dublin Regulation," RIGHTSVIEWS, Feb. 28, 2020](#)
- Daphne Matziaraki, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjnj5B2GCvc>.
[By Haru Sugishita \(Summer 2020\)](#)