

The Refugee Crisis and Structural Violence
The Case of Lesbos

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Abstract

Objective: The so called ‘refugee crisis’ of 2015 has led many to pause and take a step back at what the timeline of migration has been in history. It is almost inevitable not to pay attention to what have been the causes of mass migration in history and how it continues to this day. There can be found a footprint of violence so deeply imbedded in systems that make a group leave what they call home. And it is certainly worth paying attention to what colonialism has brought for the whole world in the past centuries to date. The migrant crisis in Europe highlights the hidden structural violence that the EU imposes on others to save its borders from the ‘others’. Trapped in a vicious cycle of violence, the migrants flee violence only to find themselves in a different form of violence at their point of arrival. This thesis analyzes and finds trace of structural violence that has brought world to where it stands today in regards to the migration crisis.

Method: Personal observations, as well as semi-structured interviews were used in conjunction with notes from personal encounters with the refugee population the author worked with. The tools for the analysis of the macro level was done by researching the literature since it was not realistic and not possible to reach out to politicians who could be interviewed for their opinions in the time period available.

Results: In the interviews, a common acknowledgement was in regards to camps’ living conditions, different treatment of ethnic groups and certain services provided to those groups. In personal observations as well as the literature analysis, it was found that policies were unjust towards certain countries and or groups of people.

Conclusion: Acknowledging the history of colonialism, structural violence and its effects on the world, will allow for better understanding of the current crisis and will be a step towards deconstructing the remain of these systems for creating fairer policies and changing the receiving population’s perception on migration. Both in academia and policy making, there needs to be a revision and paradigm shift to better prevent certain movements, and to re-evaluate the current agreements and policies that are in effect towards certain countries and or nationalities.

Key words: refugee crisis, structural violence, colonialism, economic migrant, EU-Turkey Deal, Dublin Regulation

Abbreviations and Definitions

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Migrant: A person who moves from one place to another in order to find work or better living conditions.

Refugee: A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

Refoulement: The forcible return of refugees or asylum seekers to a country where they are liable to be subjected to persecution.

Economic Migrant: A person who travels from one country or area to another in order to improve their standard of living.

IDP: Internally Displaced Person

EU: European Union

NGO: Non-governmental Organization

Asylum: the protection granted by a state to someone who has left his or her home country as a political refugee.

An explanation about Lesvos and Lesbos: The island's name is spelt with a Greek "B" or "beta" which is pronounced in Greek as a "V". Both Lesvos and Lesbos are used in English writings and are used interchangeably for the same island.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Motivation for the Study

The aim of this work is to shed light on the issue of social injustice in the form of structural violence that takes place in the refugee camps, which is also placed upon migrants by the EU policies towards non-citizens. The motivation for the study started with an orange wristband from a small social enterprise called ‘Zoe Band’. When I ordered this wristband all I knew was that they were made from life jackets worn by migrants who had arrived on Lesbos Island in Greece. I had just finished the first year of my masters degree and I have to admit I was not as knowledgeable on the situation as I should have been, having been studying Peace and Conflict studies the prior nine months. The tag attached to the wristband had a message written on it, ‘from Lesbos with love’. Over the next few months as I was doing an internship in Vienna my interest in the situation grew and in April 2017 I did some volunteer work on Lesbos in the refugee camps. I had seen refugees all my life in Iran, but never had I witnessed what life inside a camp looks or feels like. Speaking Farsi and broken Arabic to the refugees during my short stay on Lesbos intensified my experience and ignited a feeling of awakening that I could no longer ignore. I started identifying with the population there in one way or another. Over 60 years ago, my father had left Iran through the Southern shores of Persian Gulf to Kuwait on a boat in search of a better life, a life so much better that my class experience in society and my privilege and education is nowhere close to his. It all happened because he decided to leave for a better future. In today’s terms, he would be considered an ‘economic migrant’ who based on the status quo does not deserve to be given the chance. I wonder how my life would have turned out to be had he not left in search of a different life. After all, my father was fleeing structural violence, and he was lucky to be given a chance.

1.2 Background

The Island of Lesbos is home to around 88,000 inhabitants, and is only 10 kilometers away from Turkey by the Aegean Sea. In 2015, what was coined as the term the “refugee crisis” saw around 57% of the arrivals by sea through this island. The top three nationalities that arrived in 2015 came from respectively, Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan and Iraq. (UNHCR, 2015)

Afghanistan single handedly has the world’s largest refugee group, which started with the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979 and up until 1992 around one fifth of the country had fled in search of a safe home. (Amnesty International, 1999)

Nowadays Afghans make up for the second largest refugee group in the world, and the second wave of the refugee flows started in 2001 after the US invasion. The biggest part of this population lives in the two neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan. (UNHCR, 1999)

After the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the country became very unstable and the situation worsened in 2013 when ISIS gained control over parts of the country, causing many people to become displaced and end up in harsh conditions. (International Rescue Committee, 2017)

The Arab Spring in 2011, and the breakage of war in Syria between the rebel groups and Assad's regime have caused more than 5 million Syrians to flee the country and over 6 million have been displaced internally. (World Vision, 2017)

Turkey hosts the largest number of these refugees with a number around 3.4 million (European Commission).

Most Syrian refugees resided in the near by countries in camps, such as Lebanon or Turkey, but with the intensified conflict in the country by 2014, many started their journey to Europe in 2015. Europe became their only option since the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf did not accept the Syrian refugees and hence the so-called 'flood' began.

The route used to be a short ride from Istanbul to the neighboring Bulgaria, although the majority of the asylum seekers have no desire to settle in that country, and mostly are aiming to reach Western or Northern European states with stronger welfare and economic systems. But in 2014 the Bulgarian government built a fence to prevent what they saw as illegal human trafficking from Turkey and as a consequence the route to Europe was changed to the Aegean and the nearby Greek islands. Then the refugees would have to cross through the Balkan states in order to make it to their final and desired European destinations (Dragostinova, 2016).

The European Union made a deal with Turkey in 2016, which had perhaps the worst outcome for the refugees. Based on this deal, the movement of arrivals prior to March 2016 was limited, and those arriving on or after that date would be secured a deportation back to Turkey (Kitching, Haavik, Tandstad, Darj, et al, 2016).

At the moment there is a trapped population on Greek Islands, with a pending destiny. Based on the Dublin Regulation, the country responsible for the asylum procedure is the country where the person first arrives in Europe. There are exceptions to this, in cases where there is an unaccompanied minor or if there are family members that the individual wishes to unite with in another European state (Kaparitziani, 2016).

1.3 The Refugee, The Migrant and Asylum

In her 1943 'We Refugees', Hannah Arendt talks about the meaning of the word 'refugee' and its transformation from something that once drew one's compassion and empathy to an equivalent of a untrustworthy and negatively portrayed person. Seven decades later, the world is still struggling with this same issue, only slightly with different demographics. Nonetheless it always concerns a matter of 'us' versus 'them', and historically different groups fit in the 'us' team and others in the 'them' team.

In the words of the U.S. President William Howard Taft, "to make the world safe for democracy", a number of conventions and agreements emerged following the establishment of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The two concerning the stateless people in the aftermath of WWII, were the 1951 convention and the 1968 New York Protocol. The protocol removed the restrictions previously placed on the geographically specific (Europe) area that the convention covered.

The convention defines a refugee as 'someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.' The convention however is criticized for its outdated content and the fact that it fails to be inclusive for people with different issues fleeing situations that may not be well defined in the convention's criteria (Kapartziani & Papathanasiou 2016).

Contrary to a refugee, that has a deservingness status by international law, a migrant or better-put an 'economic migrant', does not have the deserving rights and is viewed as a voluntary opportunist, who flees his or her country in search of a better life. A refugee is viewed as having no 'choice' and the migrant is accused of having made a 'choice' and therefore is guilty by default. Nonetheless, the 1990 UN Convention on the Rights of the Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families does make a case for International Law to protect migrants; yet again it draws a line between the deserving migrants versus the undeserving ones. This time it's based on their legal status, and it only protects you if you are considered a legal migrant. That said, this treaty is mostly ratified by the countries in the Global South, and the US and the counties in the Western Europe have not even ratified it (Yarris & Castañada, 2015).

In 1999, at the European Council in Tampere, a plan to develop a Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was announced. It was meant to bring solidarity, common responsibility and partnership in migration issues to the member states. It has been argued by some scholars that the formation of this system has merely served as a way to restrict

migrants' access to the EU. On the same note, in order to make it more difficult for people to migrate, the states have introduced different policy measures such as visas and sanctions for instance. Ironically for asylum-seekers to apply for asylum in an EU state, they need to cross borders, and often times illegally (Kaunert & Léonard, 2012).

1.4 Dublin Regulations and the EU-Turkey Deal

One of the most significant outcomes of the European Council in Tampere, in terms of how it affects asylum seekers is the Dublin Regulation. Based on this regulation, the country responsible for the asylum procedure is the first country where the individual first arrives in Europe. There are exceptions to this, in cases where there is an unaccompanied minor or if there are family members that the individual wishes to unite with in another European state. (Kaparitziani, 2016)

If followed strictly, it would mean that the members of the EU which have either land or sea borders with non-EU states will have to burden the majority of the application for asylum seekers whose first point of entry is obviously one of these states. UNHCR has reported on the lack of proper conditions in receiving and maintaining the asylum seekers in the mentioned states such as Greece or Italy. (Blockmans, Carrera, Gros & Guild 2015)

In a response to the migration flows from Turkey to Europe, to prevent and seek solutions to the so called 'refugee crisis', the European leaders reached an agreement with Turkey, to halt the inflow of people and keep them in Turkey. This deal was signed on the 18th of March 2016, and in short summary it took the interests of states over the interests of those in need. (Haferlach & Kurban, 2017).

In a matter of one day, the reception centers on the Greek islands, which were the main points of arrival, and only a transition spot, turned into prison-like detention facilities, and the migrants arriving were treated as criminals to be held with no choice to move forward. (Amnesty, 2017)

The deal is basically based on certain promises from the EU to Turkey in return for the services provided by Turkey. Some of the statements of the deal are as follows:

1. The return of all new irregular migrants arriving from Turkey to the EU (mainly the Greek Islands) back to Turkey as of March 20th.
2. A swap system, where in return of every irregular migrant being returned to Turkey, EU receives one Syrian refugee back from Turkey.
3. Accelerating the process of making EU-entry visa-free for the Turkish nationals, with a promise from Turkey to speed up the fulfillment of the requirements.

4. A promise of up to 3 billion euros in assisting Turkey with managing the Syrian refugees
5. The process of accession of Turkey to the EU to be resumed. (Haferlach & Kurban, 2017)

1.5 Structural Violence

The Norwegian pioneer of peace research and the father of peace studies, Professor Johan Galtung, is considered the first person to coin the term 'structural violence. (Barash & Webel 2009). To understand structural violence from his perspective it is necessary to talk about the 'violence triangle' in which he divided violence into three different types. At the base there are the direct and structural violence and at the top stands cultural violence. He sees cultural violence as a tool to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence, through tools of culture such as religion, science, art, symbols and language. (Galtung, 1990)

Based on Galtung's 1969 paper titled: peace, conflict and peace research, an old and a new definition will be given to violence and an attempt at distinguishing between direct and structural violence will be made. The old definition would define violence as "somatic incapacitation, a deprivation with killing as its acute form." The new definition covers a more comprehensive idea of violence, and sees it as present when human beings' actual "somatic as well as mental realization is below their potential realization." (Galtung, 1969) He further explains violence through the difference between the potential and the actual, the latter being less than the former. An example would be if people today would die of chicken pox, it can be said that violence is present because nowadays this disease has been cured and there is not reason for it to cause casualties unless due to violence.

Direct or Personal Violence will take place when there is an actor who commits the act of violence, and Indirect or Structural Violence happens when there is no such actor. Structural Violence can be synonymized with Social Injustice. (Galtung, 1969)

For the purpose of more clarification, a few other explanations of Structural Violence will be given.

Paul Farmer, the American anthropologist who is also a physician, in his book titled, "Pathologies of Power", defines structural violence as not a directly but also as an indirectly experiencing violence through marginalization, impacts of poverty, socioeconomic class, race, sex and structures of a society. (Farmer, 2001)

1.6 In the Footsteps of Colonialism

Many scholars and researchers have pointed out the relationship between West's colonial past and how it is directly and indirectly linked to the refugee crisis of the present.

Nicholas Van Hear argues that economic instability, political violence, ethnic and religious prosecution, fraudulent systems of power, often all as a consequence of colonialism have led to displacement (1998).

In his 2007 book, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, David Harvey draws a line between the Global North and the Global South, and how the colonial relationship between the two has led to divergent development, as well as unstable and insecure political and economic situations for the South. And as a result again, there is the flow of the refugees from the South to the North (Harvey, 2007).

Ayşe Tekdal Fidlis, explains how the British and the French divided what is known today as the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire to rule the region. France was granted the mandate of Syria and Lebanon and Great Britain had the mandate for Palestine and Iraq (Fidlis, 2011).

Afghanistan, as M. Nazif Shahrani puts it, was created as a buffer zone by British India and Russia as a result of “a century long policies and practices of internal colonialism pursued by Pashtun dominated Afghan government”. (Shahrani, 2001).

1.7 Research Questions

In this thesis, the author is going to review the previous scholarly work on refugees and migration while adding a new component of ‘structural violence’ from the Peace and Conflict studies perspective. Although for a few decades there have been many research conducted regarding migration issues from different academic departments, the new refugee phenomenon requires new angles to view the situation from. The social injustice that is the underlying factor for the many reasons people flee often gets ignored and instead is replaced with finding ways to keep the problem outside Europe. This research will attempt to answer the following questions from the lens of structural violence:

1. How is colonialism related to the refugee crisis?
2. How is the EU-Turkey deal affecting the crisis since its launch?
3. How has the Dublin III Regulation a) affected refugee crisis? b) Affected a host country such as Greece?

In order to answer these questions, the topics have been divided into macro and micro levels. Colonialism, the EU-Turkey deal and the Dublin Regulation are placed in the macro section and will be analyzed theoretically using the existing literature, and at the micro level, the case study on Lesbos is placed. Using personal observations and interviews, there will be an analysis of the living conditions, ethnic tensions, and lack of schooling and gender issues that exist in the camps. As a final step, the macro and micro issues are combined together to reach the conclusion.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The sample used was taken from the camps on Lesbos. This in part is the micro sample. The macro sample is taken from the review of the existing literature as explained in the research questions above.

2.2 Instrument

Personal observations, as well as semi-structured interviews were used in conjunction with notes from personal encounters with the refugee population the author worked with. The tools for the analysis of the macro level was done by researching the literature since it was not realistic and not possible to reach out to politicians who could be interviewed for their opinions in the time period available.

2.3 Procedure

In April 2017 the author travelled to Greece, Lesbos for a three-week volunteer work with a Dutch NGO. The task was to conduct translations from mostly Farsi and at times for basic Arabic. She also spent time with children and women organizing and performing social activities. The other task included assisting the NGO's medical team with patients' registration as well as translation. Through the work there, connections were made and friendships were formed, both with the refugee population and with the volunteers. After returning from the trip, the author wrote down her observations and encounters and after some time contacted a number of colleagues for possible interviews. She created the questions mostly aiming at the NGO workers. Some of the refugees with whom she had a close connection were contacted for possible cooperation. Their response was positive, but later on it was decided the questions were too technical for them and the language skills may have not

been sufficient. Therefore it was decided to just use the previous encounters and notes from the stories with their permission.

Four questions were given to the interviewees and all interviewees answered them via email in written form. It was agreed if needed, there would be a follow up with more questions and if necessary a Skype call would be initiated.

3. Results

3.1 Interviews

The experience of those participants who had stayed longer on the island was fairly different than of those who had stayed shorter. The ones with the longer stay, had more opinions regarding institutions and voiced their opinion clearly.

The ones with shorter stays, paired with the task they were doing, had different experiences. Some had opinions to express; some didn't have much to say since they believed they were not knowledgeable enough to discuss certain topics in detail and that was reflective in their answers.

In the interviews, a common acknowledgement was in regards to camps' living conditions, different treatment of ethnic groups and certain services provided to those groups. Out of the six people interviewed, whom the author had previously worked with except one that was introduced by another volunteer to the author, all believed more or less that the African population of the camp-site was given fewer services, had an easier time adapting to their camp environment and were less prone to complain about their living conditions. But one of the interviewees had a slightly different observational experience; *she said, "Personally I would say that Africans are the least advantaged when it comes to daily confrontations with police, as they often appear within their area, which often leads to clashes.*

Africans are mostly targeted due to their asylum situation. Most migrants of African decent are most likely facing a rejection and deportation afterwards. The process in-between is being held in detention. As many resist to their situation the police try to intimidate them to suppress riots". This could be in part the reason why some didn't confront their situation, taking caution in order to avoid imprisonment or clash with the police in hopes of getting their asylum application approved. Only one of the interviewees did not observe the kind of discrimination that was observed by the author and NGO colleagues during the time spent there. In contrast, another colleague believed the ethnic groups and country of origin had

direct effect on how they experienced their living conditions or what their expectations were. Anke, the social team coordinator believed *“Based on the size of the group and their cultural norms some were more outspoken and complained more than others.”*

The Greek police was observed to have treated the refugees poorly regardless of their ethnic background. For the police it was the Greek citizens versus the refugees in general.

Although the effects of the EU-Turkey deal are analyzed in the literature part at the macro level, a question regarding the deal was asked in the interviews and all of the answers had negative connotations, citing the consequences it has brought to the island. Everyone agreed that the deal had more benefits for Turkey and the EU and less for the refugees and the Greek people of the island. It was emphasized that Lesbos had been a transitory place for the refugees to mainland Europe, but now was a place where everyone was stuck. A couple of people mentioned that the number of arrivals had dropped compared to 2015, although that didn't ease the situation of thousands of people who were now stuck on the island. Eeman, another volunteer suggested *“The EU-Turkey deal was more detrimental to refugees already in Turkey, who face very poor conditions in Turkish camps. It has also raised questions about the safety of certain refugees, such as gay and lesbian refugees, or Kurdish refugees, who are stuck or fear being deported to a hostile country like Turkey.”*

Moreover, it was highlighted how much the deal had delayed family reunification as well as protection and education of unaccompanied minors who were stuck in the Moria camp.

The camp conditions along with cold weather have caused the death of some people in Moria , where it became news and drew UNHCR's attention to the situation. It was also mentioned by the NGO nurse that the over crowdedness had made it more difficult to arrange asylum interviews and often was leading to frustration, which ultimately would result in fights in the camp.

In regards to the question about UNHCR's role on the ground, everyone had mixed answers. It was almost always mentioned that the people who work on the island from the organization are hard working with good intentions but their hands are short on many things due to the bureaucracy that is embedded in the UN system in general.

It was agreed that UNHCR had taken the responsibility for registering arrivals on the island as well as provision of blankets and living containers; it also had a role in organizing meetings with the NGOs on the ground. But UNHCR's role was and continues to be limited due to the restrictions put by the Greek Government as well as the EU.

Anke's words regarding UNHCR were, *“They have publicly mentioned that they normally do not operate in Europe at all, and that Lesbos is not an official operation for them anymore, because they do not consider the situation as no longer a crisis . They are just*

there for the 'protection' of refugees, meaning they are monitoring where people are being sent to."

The NGO's field coordinator viewed UNHCR as an advocating/mediating force on the island. She said the reason they don't take responsibility for the rights of the refugees was due to the fact that they viewed it as the Greek Government's responsibility. Another interviewee mentioned how this trend had caused distrust towards UNHCR especially among those refugees who saw it as a beacon of hope in the beginning of their arrival. All in all UNHCR's actions did not meet the expectations of neither the refugees nor the NGOs who work on Lesbos.

This could be up for debate, since it is not exactly clear what is and is not their responsibility legally speaking within EU and how strict are the limitations they face by the Greek government and the EU.

3.2 Personal Observations

The personal observations were derived from the author's own time spent on the island. They range from encounters with volunteers, refugees' in camps, both children and adults. Conversations, incidents, personal stories and medical situations are recounted. It goes further into describing the camp areas, the observable policies, and sometimes frustrations with the system. Although emotions were kept away from the observations, they are still present in the text. They will be linked to the literature work at the macro level to support the argument that structural violence is representative of the past and present in presenting the current 'refugee crisis'.

3.2.1 Observations of the campsite

The author worked in two camps when she was on Lesbos. One was for families with around 800-1000 inhabitants called Kara Tepe camp and the other was called Moria, the infamous camp with newly so-called improved conditions where over 3000 men and some women and minors lived. Moria used to be a prison and the feels of it as well as its aesthetics still resonate its history.

The two major ethnic groups consist of Afghans and Syrians or Iraqi Arabs or Kurds. In total there are over 15 or more different nationalities residing in Moria. The author volunteered with a Dutch NGO, which operated in two teams; one was a medical team that was present mostly in Moria camp and the social team that had its main focus in Kara Tepe. She speaks fluent Farsi and some basic Arabic and since these are the two most spoken languages followed by French among the refugees, the language skills became handy in

activities that were assigned to her in Kara Tepe or when she was on shift in Moria for translating for patients.

There is so much that can be said, felt and analyzed regarding the situation. The author finally was able to step into the scenes where she had witnessed in short clips from Aljazeera on her Facebook newsfeed. She explains that it felt emotional at times, frustrating, rewarding and more than anything close to heart. The overall condition and facilities of Kara Tepe were much better in comparison to those of Moria to an observable degree. The quality of UNHCR provided tents varied to an arguable level with the containers in Kara Tepe. Due to its family oriented nature, Kara Tepe felt more peaceful and calm; only children would be fighting with each other. But in Moria, things could get a little bit out of hand and tough sometimes. Fights often broke out between different ethnic groups or nationalities. Some people were liked less, and some were hated. This pattern could also be seen in groups of children in Kara Tepe.

The food was prepared and distributed in ready-packed portions in three meals, and everyone was unhappy with its quality and taste. If they wanted to cook themselves, they had to gather wood, make fire and cook outside, and this held true for both camps.

3.2.2 Healthcare

While translating for patients, the author came across many mental health patients, who previously were taking medication but since their arrival on Lesbos that had been stopped and without doubt had had its own consequences. There was a guy who had severe OCD and complained about not being able to sleep and stand his tent-mates who were about another 5-8 men. He said he would go outside the tent sit in the cold until the early hours of the morning and cry.

There were numerous patients with cuts from self-harm, who would by all means deny it but still needed to receive care for the cuts.

The NGO had inquiries for sleeping aid pills, and of course the answer would be sorry the NGO does not provide those kinds of medicine.

There was no mental health medication provided to the refugees. Patients could freely go to the center of Mytilini to the hospital, pay out of pocket and inquire a psychologist or psychiatrist's visit. It was obvious that these refugees came from different social backgrounds and different economic capabilities, but based on the 90 Euro salaries that each received per month from the EU, most claimed they could not afford seeking private healthcare.

Dental care was almost non-existent there. But this had been the case in many other camps as told by volunteers who had worked on other islands too.

The NGO had to send all dental inquires back, until one NGO sometime in May, as they had promised would bring their dentists for the duration of two weeks and it would be on a first come first served basis.

3.2.3 Moria, Compounds' Segregation

Moria camp is divided into different compounds, segregated from each other by fences, and there are guards from the NGO (EuroRelief) who work as security persons by the entrance of each compound. The division is based on geographical regions and more specifically based on ethnic or language groups. This divide had happened due to a lot of conflict that took place between different groups and it was seen as the best solution to separate the living areas. The NGO had access to enter these compounds because of a shift twice or three times a week called the 'Social Shift', during which two volunteers from the social shift would visit different compounds, talk to random residents, sometimes to the representative of a compound, ask about their conditions and concerns, make small talk, and be a tool to transfer their messages to our coordinator and hopefully through that let other actors and persons' in charge know of their concerns and demands. On one of her last social shifts, the author was the only Farsi speaker; accompanied by two other members of the team, they were at the start of the shift and decided to visit the Afghan compound and talk to some of them since she spoke Farsi and they spoke Dari, and the two are merely the same language with two different dialects.

"It started as it usually did, some greetings, small talk about the camp and conditions and then it lead to a lot of complaints by one refugee. I had to respond to him and also translate for my colleagues. He wasn't happy about his tent's condition, he wanted somewhere to exercise, and he said there is nothing offered to us here to keep healthy. He was a young man in his early to mid twenties. Then he asked me why do you guys even make this effort of coming here and asking? He asked if we are going to make those changes. My obvious answer was that we couldn't do that. We can only convey their message to our boss per se. This made him even more furious, I thought I was in an interrogation session, he kept insisting and asking why was I even there to ask those questions, what is the point? Why do we make this useless effort? At some point I decided to only act as a translator and let my other colleague who was male, and older than me to give the answers. We ended our talk there, leaving them and us with no true conclusions, and made only one more visit to another tent in that compound before we headed to the Syrian/Kurdish compound."

3.2.4 Arrivals

The social team held a few meeting per week. On the 24th of April, just 4 days before the end of my work there, the coordinator started the meeting by breaking the news to us; a boat wreck had lead to 12 casualties. A pregnant woman had been saved and she was safe in the hospital we were told.

This news came quite unexpected for us since arrivals have slowed down since last year, but nevertheless they still happen in smaller quantities but that doesn't change the degree of danger of the journey. As was mentioned by the people interviewed, the EU-Turkey Deal did not stop people from trying to cross the sea into Europe and it has merely made their journey more dangerous and has given an upper hand to the human traffickers and smugglers.

3.2.5 Discrimination and Racism among Refugees

The author explains about her witnessing discrimination and racism among the population, *“Something that really grabbed my attention while working in the camps, was the degree to which different ethnic groups of refugees be it adults or children resented each others’ group and a lot of times held racist ideas against one another.*

I remember the first time I noticed it was when I realized how much all the kids would gang up against the Angolan boy named Bassalino who was somewhere between 5 and 7. He spoke Portuguese, which already made him less likely to find someone who spoke his language. In trying to defend himself, he became the kid who attacked other kids but as I observed it this kid’s aggressive behavior would only surface when he would get bullied by other kids and he yet did not want to give us he playing or watching a movie with the other kids. The other forms of discrimination I saw in children came from the Afghans. In Afghanistan there is an ethnic group called the Hazara and they have Mongol-like features. For many years they have been subject to violence, hatred, discrimination and all forms of bullying. I saw this very prevalent in the kids who all lived in the same camp, and played together. I remember once a Hazara boy got bitten up by a group of other Afghan girls making fun of his features and telling him to “go back to China” because of his features. In Moria camp I witnessed a lot of resentment towards the African population and a lot of racist behavior from Iranians towards the Afghans.”

3.2.6 Hunger Strike in Moria Camp

The author was also witness to a hunger strike carried by a group of Kurds and Syrians in protest of their status. Some had their cases rejected twice, and now feared possible

deportations to Turkey, and there they said being a Kurd makes it more dangerous for them to live than for other refugees since Turkey has a long history of conflict and human rights violations with the Kurds. The others were protesting the long wait period, which in most cases was over one year in contrast to many other cases getting approved in a few months. Their situation as they claimed had worsened by the EU-Turkey deal and the closure of European borders.

3.2.7 Women's Group and Excursions

Due to her knowledge of the Farsi language, the author was assigned to participate with another colleague in two activities that were tailored for Farsi speaking women whom were mainly Afghans and on occasion one Iranian woman.

The group initially had a translator, but since she herself was a refugee and was going through the same hardship as others, it was decided that during the time the author was there she could take over her job and the translator could also participate and benefit from the gatherings.

There was the women's group, which was a support group for women twice a week, and once a week on Sundays there was the women's excursion, which meant taking women out to a picnic somewhere in nature outside of the camp for rehabilitation or just socializing purposes. The women's group did not have any limit to its number of participants as it was held in a big container in Kara Tepe camp, but for the excursions only two cars were scheduled and that limited the number of participants. Sadly this service was not provided to the African population or the non-Farsi or speaking or Arabic speaking women. Part of this experience was very personal to the author as she explains, *"What came so close to my heart, and often disheartening, was the experiences they told us about mostly from when living in Iran. Being an Iranian myself, I had always been in contact and maybe somehow had become immune to the existence of over 1 million Afghan refugees in Iran. But I had never had such face-to-face, deep conversations about their experiences and hardships they had gone through while living in Iran. These were the times were I would find myself feeling confused, guilty, and determined all at once. Through those encounters I saw what the life of an Afghan refugee inside Iran had been like. The small details, the daily challenges these women had gone through, the "us versus them" idea that I had been grown up with was there, confronting my own morals."*

3.3 Existing Literature

3.3.1 The Dublin Regulation Critics

As mentioned earlier in the text, the Dublin System came out as a series of regulations, specifically in three parts to better manage the asylum applications. Table 1 demonstrates the dates and the content of each one of them.

There have been many critics to the way in which the Dublin System perceives the asylum cases. By introducing a scheme where the first port of arrival to Europe is the state responsible for the process of asylum seekers' application, pressure is put on states that have either land or sea borders with non-EU member states, resulting in receiving a huge number of illegal arrivals

Dublin Convention (97/C 254/01)	1997	Establishes the criteria to determine which member state should be responsible for the examination of the asylum application.
Dublin II (No. 343/2003)	2003	Defines the hierarchical criteria to establish the member state responsible for each asylum application.
Dublin III (No. 694/2013)	2013	Clarifies rules and responsibilities of member states, including which state should bear the cost of the application.

and evidently sea fatalities and the cost of patrolling their borders. Many refugees also do not wish to remain in EU states that are not financially doing well compared to other states nor have the same kind of social welfare systems directed towards the refugee population, therefore many escape from reception centers that take finger prints and register the arrivals, in order to claim a state of their own liking as their first point of entry (Cellini, 2017).

Lisa Schuster conducted a field research in which she demonstrated that the Dublin II was a way for states to ignore their moral and legal responsibilities towards certain groups of asylum seekers by denying their applications (Schuster, 2011).

Another issue that arises is the fact that many states have adopted the Dublin System but opted out from the EU Asylum Laws, because EU laws are bound by the principle of non-refoulement. This way they can still deport people to countries of first arrival and not be responsible for abiding by EU's asylum laws.

Dublin System is based on the assumption that asylum seekers receive the same treatment and their applications are equally processed regardless of the responsible European state, but the states' response to the refugee crisis is largely based on a nation-state framework allowing nations to decide and act domestically as they wish (McNally, 2017). The unfairness and the amount of financial burden, as well as population capacity that states such as Greece and Italy are faced with are pressing issues which in short and long-term result in loss of trust from both the public of those countries and the refugee population, and in turn can affect how the overwhelming number of applications received are processed, often violating fundamental human rights (Zamanian, 2017).

3.3.2 The EU-Turkey Deal

The EU-Turkey deal, as explained in earlier chapters, was developed as a reactionary measure by the European Union to the with the 'refugee crisis' of 2015. Based on an Amnesty International report in 2017, the deal secured a 6 billion Euro payment to Turkey by the EU in support of Turkey's assistance to refugees in the country and granted Turkish nationals visa-free travel to Europe. Turkey would have to receive every irregular migrant who had arrived in Europe and more specifically on Lesbos (as Turkey is the regular port from which migrants would take a boat to Europe and Lesbos is one of the main arrival points). What this deal meant for the migrants/asylum seekers, combined with the Dublin Regulation, was unsafe conditions with prolonged stays on the island in camps already overpopulated. The policy creates a sense of oppression, insecurity and a feeling of being trapped for the asylum-seekers, and ultimately contains and immobilizes them. What is apparent is the miscalculation made by the European Union, in hopes of reducing the number of arrivals. Boats still continue to arrive to the shores of the island and what deteriorates the situation is the stockiness, the unknown that awaits those arriving.

Reports have also surfaced documenting the unlawful imprisonment of refugees in detention centers in some provinces in Turkey, with the aim to force the asylum-seekers to return to Syria voluntarily. Right before the signing of the deal, Turkish authorities reportedly deported hundreds of refugees to Syria. According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), Turkish border guards killed five Syrians who were attempting to cross into Turkey (HRW, 2016a). The rise in such incidences indicates that the deal is promoting the mistreatment of asylum-seekers due to an unrealistic amount of pressure put on Turkey to live up to the deal. The EU continues to jeopardize refugees' safety by allowing Turkey to use them as a bargaining chip to push through its own demands.

Another issue arises from the exclusiveness of the deal. It only promises a readmission of

Syrian refugees to Europe and does not reserve such right for all the other asylum seekers who wish to cross into Europe from Turkey. It seems as if there exists now a merit-based system, where Syrians who have not crossed the borders illegally, are given a higher chance of admission to Europe. This adds to the fact that Syrians are the highest number of migrants entering Europe and possibly more favored by the European governments as a population where most of whom hold a degree and therefore seen as a potential asset for the host country (Peers 2016a).

The deal also contradicts the concept of non-refoulement to countries not considered safe. With Turkey's political state in the past few years, the attempted coup as well as the social unrest and the treatment of refugees, its level of safety for the returnees is questionable. But according to the deal, migrant's forcible return to Turkey was indeed saving them from taking risks to attempt irregular border crossings (European Council, 2016).

It can also be argued that the 2016 deal and recognizing Turkey as a 'safe third country' for asylum-seekers is part of an older negotiation between Turkey and the EU, with the aim of pushing back irregular migrants out of the Schengen zone and more towards Turkey. The only special aspect of the 2016 deal is the possibility for refugees to be pushed back from EU territory before they had the chance to apply for asylum or make any claims (UNHCR, 2016).

4. Discussion

4.1 Summary of Findings

This study was based on the personal observations of the author which were initially based on the idea that camp conditions as well as policies were unjust, hence the introduction of the concept of structural violence in an attempt to explain the situation on the ground. Furthermore, structural violence was used to identify the unfair pressure put on certain states such as Greece and Turkey. Through a set of semi-structured interviews, analysis of the campground, and through literature review and policy analysis connections were made to reflect the underlying injustice through observations made by the author, the camps and the EU's response to the refugee crisis.

Although there are many detailed studies on the effects of the EU-Turkey deal or the Dublin regulation, there cannot be found much research on these topics collectively as a mechanism for structural violence.

Additionally tracing back the roots of the refugee crisis to colonialism adds a new perspective and sheds light to its ever-neglected history in understanding what is going on in

Middle East and Africa today in relations to migration to Europe. Shireen Hunter, a Research Professor at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, citing the British Historian Arnold Toynbee, argues that negligence of large parts of the world and their populations have resulted in what is seen today as the refugee crisis (Hunter, 2015).

The aim of the study and the questions asked was to evaluate the “refugee crisis” with the lens of structural violence. Colonialism, the Dublin regulation and EU-Turkey deal in combination with the campsite observations provided the basis for the analysis. In an attempt to investigate the role of colonialism in the current refugee situation, connections were found between countries of origin of the refugees being a former colony. (Zamanian, 2017).

4.2 Limitations of the study

There are a number of issues that can be considered as the limitations put on the study. First the short time (three weeks) spent on the island of Lesbos, limited the duration of the observation and can cause a biased judgment of the situation for better or worse. Secondly the number of volunteers interviewed was small and only from one NGO. This limited the scope of the experiences and caused a lack of perspective from other organizations. Lastly the linkages that were made between colonialism, EU-Turkey Deal, the Dublin Regulation and structural violence in connection to the refugee crisis made the study a little scattered. The combination was rare and when it comes to Peace Studies, the study of structural violence is not widely researched on especially in regards to migration. Additionally, the Deal and Dublin system are mainly analyzed from a legal perspective and sometime a health perspective in domains such as public health. This made the connections less strong. Since no statistic from data analysis such as SSPS were used, and the research relied on literature and interviews/observations, it is more difficult to make firm conclusions on the results as personal opinion can constitute the interviews and personal observations. Another barrier was caused by the fact as the NGO’s policy interviews/questionnaires were not allowed with the asylum-seekers and a major aspect of the study lacked a refugee-perspective.

4.3 Conclusion and Suggestions

Nevertheless, it is evident that there exists an underlying injustice in the system where asylum-seekers are received and their cases processed. Many of the asylum-seekers come from the countries with a colonial history where poverty and violence are ever present in their society today. Dubbed together with the EU-Turkey Deal, the Dublin System puts a lot of pressure on the hotspot countries that are the main ports of arrival in Europe and has created an unequal burden on the responsibility sharing between states.

The European Union needs to reconsider its agreement with Turkey and its effects on the lives of people. Especially, taking into consideration the social and political climate of Turkey nowadays to better evaluate the safety for returnees under the deal. As preventive measure for the arrival for economic migrants, it is obvious that there needs to be a paradigm shift in how academia as well as policy makers view the post-colonial states and instead of blocking arrivals of keeping those asylum-seekers in detention centers, it is best to have mitigation measures back in their countries of origin. It can be done through better planned development aid, creation of a violence and conflict prevention environment, and easier visa process for workers to the Global North and acknowledgement of the past as it can be seen as the first step towards a paradigm shift.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Sample

1. How long have you been/were you on the Island of Lesbos, and Moria refugee camp?

I have worked inside Moria for nearly 9 months within the protection team.

2. Do you feel all ethnic groups in the camps have the same living experience? Explain

In general the living experiences are similar, based on the fact that all refugees are located inside tents and containers. However, the ethnic groups are separated. Afghans, Syrians, Iranians and Africans are located in specific living areas within their own ethnic groups. Personally I would say that Africans are the least advantaged when it comes to daily confrontations with police, as they often appear within their area, which often leads to clashes.

3. Are you familiar with the EU-Turkey deal? If yes, how would say it has impacted the conditions on the island since its launch in March 2016?

The impact of the EU-Turkey had a big impact on the living and asylum conditions on the island. The refugees are stuck inside Moria and the asylum procedures take sometimes up to two years, which means that entire families cannot even leave the islands. The camp is overpopulated, and most refugees are left without additional services such as medical or educational possibilities, especially for unaccompanied minors. Frustrations are high, criminality rate is rising, and human trafficking rate is rising. Furthermore, reunification processes for unaccompanied minors are often delayed, which results in those minors to be stuck in section B under difficult circumstances and without any education or appropriate protection.

4. What do you think of the role of UNHCR on the island?

UNHCR is supposed to provide housing services – which they barely do. Many refugees, especially the most vulnerable ones are still on the waiting list for more appropriate housing and many must wait for many months to be re-located which leads to traumatic experiences. Furthermore, many refugees have no trust in UNHCR due to their insufficient and unfriendly services, which often leads to frustration within the camps.

Extra

2) Africans are mostly targeted due to their asylum situation. Most migrants of African decent are most likely facing a rejection and deportation afterwards. The process in between is being held in detention. As many resist to their situation the police tries to intimidate them to

suppress riots.

Q3) You have to be more specific here. What do you want to know?

Last Q.) The legal information can be attained through metradasi and European lawyers and sometimes DRC. However, due to the current overpopulation it's very hard to get appointments.

Mental health used to be provided by IOM, they had to leave 1.oct. Now there are local services, but due to the massive demand there is no sufficient supply. Many suicide attempts were reported/suspected, with insufficient preventive measures of such attempts. There's only one psychiatrist on the island and she can't cope with the amount of referrals, so mentally ill people have no access to medication.

APPENDIX 2

Observations (full text)

Background Info on Lesbos Island and my interest in the location:

I first came across the name Lesbos when I saw an advertisement for bracelets made of life jackets on the island by an American tourist there named Zoe. I purchased the Zoe band and my interest grew as the months went by. I moved to Austria and seeing so many refugees in my daily life, in the train station and on the streets, and more importantly discussing the topic over and over during the lectures I attended during my internship there made me ask myself this question: why have I not seen what it's like to be on that island? And the question was followed by so many other questions: How does a camp really look like? Who lives in those camps? Do people really encounter those situations and what's going to happen next?

Of course, there are many more camps, in many more countries who hosts refugees, but Lesbos particularly became of my own interest due to the attention it received on the media and the recurring repetition of its name everywhere I watched, heard or read something on this issue. So I can't tell that I had much prior knowledge on it, or that academically it was seen as more important. I relied on my feelings, they were keen on discovering what's going on in a place where once was only known to public, majority the European public as an ultimate Aegean vacation spot with its ever-changing landscape.

The situation nowadays on Lesbos, is one of sustainability of the refugees lives rather than an emergency crisis response to new arrivals. Since the closing on the borders , they have remained on the island, but there are still some arrivals, nothing compared to that of 2015.

As we all know, what is labeled now as the crisis started, as an escalation of the violent civil war in Syria but this was only a continuum on what had already started many years ago with the invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq.

Observations on the campsite:

I worked in two camps when I was on Lesbos. One was for families with around 800-1000 inhabitants called Kara Tepe camp and the other was called Moria, the infamous camp with newly so-called improved conditions where over 3000 men and some women and minors lived. Moria used to be a prison and the feel of it as well as its aesthetics still resonate its history.

The two major ethnic groups are Afghans and Syrian or Iraqi Arabs or Kurds. But in total there are over 15 different nationalities residing on campsite. I volunteered with a Dutch NGO which operated in two teams one was a medical team that operated mostly in Moria camp and the social team that had its main focus in Kara Tepe. I speak fluent Farsi and some basic Arabic and since these are the two most spoken languages followed by French among the refugees, my language skills became handy in activities we were assigned to in Kara Tepe or when I was on shift in Moria for translating for patients.

There is so much that can be said, felt and analyzed regarding the situation, but I finally was able to step into the scenes where I had witnessed on short clips from Aljazeera on my Facebook newsfeed. It felt emotional at times, frustrating, rewarding and more than anything close to heart. The overall condition and facilities of Kara Tepe are much better in comparison to those of Moria to an observable degree. The quality of UNHCR provided tents varies to an arguable degree with the containers in Kara Tepe. Due to its family oriented nature, Kara Tepe feels more peaceful and calm, you only find children fighting with each other and that's your biggest challenge a lot of times. But in Moria, things can get a little bit out of hand and tough sometimes. Fights often breakout between different ethnic groups or nationalities. Some people are liked less, and some are hated. This pattern can also be seen in groups of children in Kara Tepe.

The food is prepared and distributed in ready-packed portions in three meals, and everyone is unhappy with its quality and taste. If they want to cook themselves, they have to gather wood, make fire and cook outside, and this holds true for both camps.

Mental Health and available care:

While translating for patients, I came across many mental health patients, who previously were taking medication but since their arrival on Lesbos that has been stopped and without doubt had had its own consequences. There was a guy who had severe OCD and complained about not being able to sleep and stand his tent-mates who were about another 5-8 men. He said he would go outside the tent sit in the cold until the early hours of the morning and cry.

There were numerous patients with cuts from self-harm, who would by all means deny it but still needed to receive care for the cuts.

We had inquiries for sleeping aid pills, and of course our answer would be sorry we don't provide those kinds of medicine.

There is no mental health medication provided to the refugees, I didn't find out exactly the reason for the lack of this facility. Patients could freely go to the center of Mytilini to the hospital, pay out of pockets and inquire a psychologist or psychiatrist's visit. It is obvious that these refugees came from different social backgrounds and different economic capabilities, but based on the 90 Euro salaries that each received per month from the EU, most claimed they could not afford seeking private healthcare.

Dental Care:

Dental care is almost non-existent there. But this is the case in many other camps as I heard from volunteers who had worked on other islands too.

I didn't find out when was the last time any dental care was provided in the camps but while I was there we had to send all dental inquires back, until one NGO sometime in May, as they had promised would bring their dentists for the duration of two weeks and it would be on a first come first served basis.

Moria, Compounds' Segregation:

Moria camp is divided into different compounds, segregated from each other by fences, and there are guards from the NGO (EuroRelief) who work as security persons by the entrance of each compound. The division is based on geographical regions and more specifically based on ethnic or language groups. I heard this divide happened due to a lot of conflict that took place between different groups and it was seen as the best solution to separate the living areas. I had access to enter these compound because the NGO I worked with had a shift twice or three times a week called the 'Social Shift', during which two volunteers from the social shift would visit different compounds, talk to random residents, sometimes to the representative of a compound, ask about their conditions and concerns, make small talk, and be a tool to transfer their messages to our coordinator and hopefully through that let other actors and persons' in charge know of their concerns and demands. On one of my last social shifts, I was the only Farsi speaker; two other members of my team accompanied me, we were at the start of our shift and decided to visit the Afghan compound and talk to some of them since I spoke Farsi and they spoke Dari and the two are merely the same language with two different dialects.

It started as it usually did, some greetings, small talk about the camp and conditions and then it lead to a lot of complaints by one refugee. I had to respond to him and also translate for my colleagues. He wasn't happy about his tent's condition, he wanted somewhere to exercise, and he said there is nothing offered to us here to keep healthy. He was a young man in his

early to mid twenties. Then he asked me why do you guys even make this effort of coming here and asking? He asked if we are going to make those changes. My obvious answer was that we couldn't do that. We can only convey their message to our boss per se. This made him even more furious, I thought I was in an interrogation session, he kept insisting and asking why was I even there to ask those questions, what is the point? Why do we make this useless effort? At some point I decided to only act as a translator and let my other colleague who was male, and older than me to give the answers. We ended our talk there, leaving them and us with no true conclusions, and made only one more visit to another tent in that compound before we headed to the Syrian/Kurdish compound.

The facts that I spoke Farsi and some basic Arabic usually would make many excited and encourage them to talk, tell their stories and sometimes jump out of the tent for some chitchat. In the compound we started talking to an older man whose friends started translating for him. He was suffering from some heart problems along some other health issues, he has never visited the medical cabin from our Ngo, nor MDM. I was surprised but I still told him about those facilities, and urged his friend to take him there the next morning and get him checked. He seemed depressed and he had never left the compounds. He wouldn't go out, even though they are allowed to leave and go back to the premises both in Moria and in Kara Tepe.

I wondered how many others are out there who have not left their compounds, or who actually don't know enough about the services that are offered to them, or those who are in a phase that just refuse to leave or receive the little help and minimal services that are offered to them.

Lifejacket Graveyard:

An hour and a half from Mytilini, all the way on the North shore rests the town of Molyvos. Up until the Refugee Crisis of 2015, Molyvos was known to European tourists as the ultimate vacation spot on the island of Lesbos. Due to its close proximity to Turkey, this was the site where the refugee boats would arrive and up to this day continue to arrive in smaller quantities. Upon arrival I was told, they only stay there for a couple of days and they were sent to Mytilini where the camps were. But this made tourism go down in the past two years, the idea of encountering a refugee boat on the North Shore wasn't so appealing to the tourists. The house where I stayed has a bulletin board with information and updates and a piece of paper with a picture and map coordinates caught my attention the very first time I started at the board. It was for the "Lifejacket Graveyard". I asked other volunteers who had been in already working there, and they told me it's a hill on which you find thousands of lifejackets and dinghies piled up upon each other. Two of my colleagues said they were planning to go see them in a couple of days and without doubt I would join them too.

To get to the actual graveyard you have to divert from the road that goes to Molyvos, it's about a 10-15 minute drive from the hill to the village. We decided to first pay a visit to the Graveyard, and after that be like tourists in Molyvos for a couple of hours. This trip took place a few days into my arrival on the island and the start of my short-period of work there.

One Friday morning, we drove for one hour and half to get to our destination, we had to go through some very lumpy dirt road and even though the graveyard was on a hill, it is quite hidden until we make it all the way to the top. There I was amazed by the size, and the variety so to say that was laid out. Color was everywhere. Orange, navy, yellow, grey, but above all orange; it was a city full of lifejacket residents. We walked slowly but also eager to make in the middle of the pathway through the two humongous piles of lifejacket and dinghies. Once we were in the middle of it all, we all became silent, and without talking to one another each of us took a different path and continued on walking alone. We stayed on our own for over half an hour, each eventually finding a spot to sit down with a view of the graveyard, and finding a moment to contemplate on what was in front of us. Many of these lifejackets were toddler size; many had warning signs not to be used as lifejackets. Many were filled with material that were not meant to float on water anyways. There in front of us sat a sea of lifejackets, those who wore it could be anywhere in the world now, that is if they survived the sea and made it alive.

I walked through the pathway again, took some pictures, took some videos, but I was sure my documentation wouldn't do justice to what was put in front of my eyes at that point.

We drove back to go to Molyvos, had lunch there on a beautiful terrace overlooking the Aegean Sea, with some fresh lemonade and tzaziki. This all took place in only fifteen minutes away from what was the remainder of the aftermath of a crisis in the past two years of our history. On this occasions, and many others, I found myself uneasy, confused, and at times guilty of enjoying the very simple pleasures of what a traveller would enjoy because of the other side of the reality that I would deal with, because of the very reason why I was there on that island.

Hunger Strike in Moria:

One of the days that I had a shift at Moria camp, upon entering the campsite my colleagues and I learned about a Hunger Strike that around 8-10 Syrian Kurds had started, in protesting their status. Some I learned had their cases rejected twice, and now feared possible deportations to Turkey, and there they said being a Kurd makes it more dangerous for them to live than for other refugees since Turkey has a long history of conflict and human rights violations with the Kurds. The others were protesting the long wait period, which in most

cases was over one year in contrast to many other cases getting approved in a fewer months. Our Ngo started checking their health condition during the night shift of our operation since others medical facilities did not function during nighttime. Once of the Syrian-Palestinian refugees, who also acted as an Arabic translator for our team, told us last year he went on a hunger strike with a few others, but it really did not bring about any changes and he saw their decision as useless. They hunger strikers had signs in different languages but Arabic hanging from an open shelter space where they were on strike. They said they did it to attract media attention and get their voices heard. The reason why they did not want Arabic to be included was because none of the Arabic nations the said cared about their fate. Moria camp is situated outside the city on a hill-like location by the sea and at nighttime temperatures drop by a large degree and it can get very cold.

Our medical team started advising some of them to drink some water and some to take medicine as they were getting sick and weak after a couple of day without water and food. They mostly refused at first, but one of the striker's conditions worsened and he eventually agreed to take some medicine. Another guy had to be rushed to the hospital one morning because he had a very high fever and they worried it could cost his health more than just a fever.

This was a few days of limbo, some Greek media showed up and some news got out regarding their strike and demands. But nothing solid was to be promised, and they were getting weaker by day. After many efforts and their friends, medical teams and other refugees they finally broke their strike after a week of food and water deprivation. It was difficult to see how they made that decision, slept in the cold, and I found it very unethical to make their efforts seem useless, or to judge them, or force them to eat. Who was I to tell them what they should do. I don't know if I would be put in those conditions, what I would do out of frustration.

Deportations:

One day as my colleagues and I arrived to Moria, at the entrance things looked very chaotic. I saw a couple of vans, some lawyers standing around, some Arab and many African refugees by the gate and a lot of crying and sobbing could be heard. I assumed this had something to do with deportations.

But the environment was hostile and I wasn't sure if I could just walk to someone and ask him or her about what was going on. We continued to go inside and we had to make it to our shift on time. I still remember the crying face of two African women who were holding each other real tight, which seemed to be a separation farewell; my guess was that one of the two was being deported, where I wished one would be headed toward Athens and not Turkey.

Later we asked other Ngo working if they knew what exactly was the case or what was going on but they also seemed to be as clueless as we were about the earlier happenings.

Arrivals:

Our social team held a few meeting per week. I remember on the 24th of April, just 4 days before the end of my work there, our coordinator started the meeting by breaking the news to us; a boat wreck had lead to 12 casualties. A pregnant woman had been saved and she was safe in the hospital we were told.

This news came quite unexpected for us since arrivals have slowed down since last year, but nevertheless they still happen in smaller quantities but that doesn't change the degree of danger of the journey.

My work, women's group, women's excursion:

Due to my knowledge of the Farsi language, I was assigned to participate with another colleague of mine in two activities that were tailored for Farsi speaking women whom were mainly Afghans and on occasion I saw one Iranian woman.

The group initially had a translator, but since she herself was a refugee and was going through the same hardship as others, it was decided that during the time I was there I could take over her job and she could also participate and benefit from the gatherings.

We had women's group, which was a support group for women twice a week, and once a week on Sundays we had women's excursion, which meant we took women out to a picnic somewhere in nature outside of the camp for rehabilitation or just socializing. The women's group did not have any limit to its number of participants as it was held in a big container in Kara Tepe camp, but for the excursions we had to we only had two cars scheduled and that limited the number of women we could take.

Through out our meetings and picnics I became close to these women, as many of them were regular attenders, especially when it came to the support group. We would meet on Wednesdays and Fridays in the afternoon for two hours in collaboration with another Portuguese NGO; each meeting would have a theme for discussion, and some form of group activity. Our topics ranged from inner beauty, forgiveness, empowerment and we held mediation and yoga sessions too.

There these women opened up about their past experiences, their stories were heard, as well as their hopes an fears. This group had become little by little a sanctuary for these women, to bond, to cry, to laugh and most importantly to support one another. The learned practical skills on how to do mediation in their containers and I being a regular practitioner of yoga for some years, gave them some simple yoga moves to do on their own.

What came so close to my heart, and often disheartening, was the experiences they told us about mostly from when living in Iran. Being an Iranian myself, I had always been in contact and maybe somehow had become immune to the existence of over 1 million Afghan refugees in Iran. But I had never had such face-to-face, deep conversations about their experiences and hardships they had gone through while living in Iran. These were the times were I would find myself feeling confused, guilty, and determined all at once. Through those encounters I saw what the life of an Afghan refugee inside Iran had been like. The small details, the daily challenges these women had gone through, the “us versus them” idea that I had been grown up with was there, confronting my own morals.

The excursions on the other hand were not too emotionally intense, it included women playing their music of their choice on their phones, having a little snack, sometimes taking their head scarves off when no one was around, talking about very women’s related topics and of course always leading to their stories and their fears of what was awaiting them on the other side of Europe, if anything!

Refugee experiences/ Stories:

Huma was a 23-year-old girl I met through my work in the women’s group. She was also our translator for the Farsi speaking women. Back in Afghanistan she had studied midwifery. She was married and lived with her husband in a container at Kara Tepe camp. Unlike many Afghans, who had previously lived in Iran, she had directly left from Afghanistan to Turkey and Greece. She has only passed through Iran to get to Turkey. Her story came to us later on during one of our group’s sessions; it was about forgiveness and we all had to decide on one person to forgive at the end of that session. She told us about her father’s second wife, who in absence of her mother had abused her by burning her body. She showed up the scars from the injury and it was rather a horrific scene.

Huma was innocent, and shy at times. She was dealing with some female health complications and I only found out one day because during an excursion she opened up about her sex life with her husband, how he insists on having a baby soon, and how she doesn’t feel comfortable having sex because of some severe pain she felt in her lower abdomen, and the husband she explained complains about the situations. It was hard for her to tell everyone about her issue, as it was a very private matter, yet she needed to seek help. I got in touch with our medical team and arranged for our female nurse to see her and specifically told them the issue. Huma said earlier on another doctor from another organization had seen her and had told her nothing was wrong. I wasn’t sure if it was a lack of communication or if they just couldn’t care about health issues that seemed minor or if it was merely a misdiagnosis.

Basel , who was in his early twenties, was a translator for our NGO and lived in Moria camp. He was Syrian by passport but his family came from Palestine and they were initially Palestinian refugees in Syria for two generations. He was a chemistry student in Syria, but his family insisted on him leaving the country over a year ago, fearing his age and gender would put him in a greater risk with the Assad regime. His family remains back in Syria. His case was still pending despite the fact that he had already been on Lesbos for over a year by the time I met him in April. His plan was to go to Germany or Holland and continue with his studies, but ultimately he said he want to take his family and go back to Palestine where he believed they belonged. He wanted to fight back for his freedom and his family's freedom and right to live in their original homeland before Syria. When I learned of his history I realized here I had a guy with actually a double refugee status. This highlighted the history, and the contagiousness of violence in the region. His family has to flee a war, and he had to flee a second war. He was very good with human psychology and he often acted as a mediator when fights broke out, or when one of his friends would fall into a panic attack or a seizure, he would so well and patiently help our medical team and talk them out of it. Basel had a sad story, a vague future, and some resentment for the Israeli regime; nevertheless, Basel was a guy with always a smile on his face. He had hope and a positive energy radiating through his vibes.

Mahdi was an Afghan refugee, 20 years old, and he had grown up in Pakistan. Spoke English and Urdu and Dari. He was another one of our translators for the Medical team at Moria camp. His family was back in Pakistan; he has hopes of going to Holland. But he ultimately wanted to find a job to be able to travel the world. He always made jokes and gave us riddles to solve.

Emanuel was a young man from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. We found the group of Ethiopians tucked all the way at the end of Area 1 sitting underneath a make-shift tent smoking hashish with some sitting on buckets and others on folded clothes. As we approached, Emanuel, who was sitting in the middle of the group, was the first to greet us. He spoke exceptionally good English, and that might be explained by the fact that he was previously a tour guide in Ethiopia. The others offered us buckets to sit on silently. Emanuel did the majority of the talking, and he told us that everyone we saw sitting with him was fleeing political repression in Ethiopia. It brings to mind the three main reasons why people were coming to Moria: war, like the Afghans/Syrians, and Iraqis, life prospects like the North and Sub-Saharan Africans, but the third one, fleeing a totalitarian regime, often goes unreported in the media, but was the reality for the Iranians, Ethiopians, and Eritreans in the camps We tried to learn more about the lives of those sitting around Emanuel before they became refugees, and Emanuel told us

that they were mostly engineers and accountants. He then thanked us tremendously for coming, and told us that the next time we had social shift, it would mean a lot to him to have the chance to talk to us again. I realized these social shifts might actually be having an impact NGO's involved, their work and their goals, Mosaic Center:

Of the NGO's I encountered while I was working there I can say the majority were from the Netherlands, some Greeks and some Portuguese. OF course the UNHCR had a very mild presence there.

Euro Relief was another NGO, a religion-based Mennonite group, which provided many services at Moria camp at a very large scale.

MSM and Doctors Without Borders were the only major medical providers, and our Ngo Boat Refugee Foundation provided basic medical care and night-shift emergency care.

These Ngo's alongside UNHCR and The Greek government and the city who were in charge of these camps were all in contact and worked in cooperation in regards to that provided what service.

Mosaic Center was an institute run by the local Greeks, which offered many classes for the refugees for free. Their classes ranged rom Greek, English, Computer to Yoga and Meditation. A part of the mosaic center was dedicated to making bags and other goodies from the life jackets and the profits ultimately helped the center as well as the refugees who were employed their and made the products.

Discrimination and Racism among Refugees:

Something that really grabbed my attention while working in the camps, was the degree to which different ethnic groups of refugees be it adults or children resented each others' group and a lot of times held racist ideas against one another.

I remember the first time I noticed it was when I realized how much all the kids would gang up against the Angolan boy named Bassalino who was somewhere between 5 and 7. He spoke Portuguese, which already made him less likely to find someone who spoke his language. In trying to defend himself, he became the kid who attacked other kids but as I observed it this kid's aggressive behavior would only surface when he would get bullied by other kids and he yet did not want to give us he playing or watching a movie with the other kids.

The other forms of discrimination I saw in children came from the Afghans. In Afghanistan there an ethnic group called the Hazara and they have mongol-like features. For many years he have been subject to violence, hatred, discrimination and all forms of bullying. I saw this very prevalent in the kids who all lived in the same camp, and played together. I remember once a hazara boy got bitten up by a group of other Afghan girls making fun of his features and telling him to "go back to China" because of his features.

In Moria camp I witnessed a lot of resentment towards the African population and a lot of racist behavior from Iranians towards the Afghans.

Appendix 3

Photos



Hunger Strike at Moria Camp



Kara Tepe Camp, April 2017.



The Lifejacket Graveyard, Lesbos, April 2017.



Paniz Zamanian at Moria Camp during shift. April 2017



Graffiti on the walls of a building situated on a street on the way to Kara Tepe.

