

Greek winter may claim refugee lives if Europe does not act now



Unless Europe urgently steps up its support to tens of thousands of refugees in Greece, harsh winter conditions may claim lives of vulnerable families living in squalid conditions.

“We’re facing a preventable human catastrophe. The refugee camp in Lesbos is bursting beyond capacity, and conditions are worsening by the week. As many as 150 people have arrived on a single day”, said the Director for the Norwegian Refugee Council’s expert deployment capacity, NORCAP, Benedicte Giæver, who visited Greece last week.

The situation is becoming increasingly desperate for thousands of children, women and men whose futures lie in limbo on the Greek islands and mainland. For example, the Moria camp in Lesbos has nearly 9,000 refugees and migrants living in a space with facilities meant for maximum 3,000 people.

The refugee camps are ramping up for winter, but insufficient blankets, winter clothes and space are available for families residing within them. Nearly 30 people share a toilet in Moria camp, and water and sanitation facilities are woefully inadequate. There is also a lack of space to put up more facilities.

“Greece has done its utmost to keep its borders open, but cannot handle this

crisis alone. Other European countries must step up and take their share of responsibility both through financial support and expertise on the ground,” Giæver said.

NORCAP has deployed some 50 aid experts to Greece since the beginning of the refugee influx in 2015. Some have worked directly with the emergency response through the UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR. Others have helped support the Greek Reception and Identification Services. Six new experts will soon be deployed.

“Although refugees are painfully aware of dismal conditions in the camps before fleeing their home countries, many still choose to take the risk. However, with winter fast approaching, people are becoming increasingly vulnerable and conditions will fast deteriorate unless we act now,” warned Giæver.

Source: <https://www.nrc.no/expert-deployment/2016/2018/greek-winter-may-claim-refugee-lives-if-europe-does-not-act-now/>

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