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## **Modern Racism in Greece**

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*The contemporary European racism has as its main reference the foreign migrants.*

*My aim is to map the various guises under which race and racism operate in Greece. My interest is in contemporary phenomena, which have deep historical roots, but easily lend themselves to essentialising discourses.*

### **Race and racism in legal and institutional frameworks.**

The Constitution of Greece, adopted in 1975 and last revised in 2008, establishes the respect for and protection of the human being as the prime obligation of the State (art. 2, par. 1). It further ensures the full protection of the life, honor, and freedom of all persons within Greek territory irrespective of nationality, race, language, and religious or political beliefs (art. 5, par. 2). A number of other provisions guarantee individual freedoms and interests, and provide for legal rights and protections, thus setting a basic framework against racist and other discriminatory actions. Greece has also signed and ratified a number of international and regional treaties, which take precedence over national law, and are concerned with the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Among them, the 1950s European Convention on Human Rights stipulates the enjoyment of rights and freedoms “without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social

origin, association with national minority, property, birth or other status” (art. 14). The 2014 anti-racism law punishes any person who by any means “incites, causes, induces or encourages to acts or actions that may cause discrimination, hatred or violence against a person or group of persons, identified on the basis of race, color, religion, genealogical origins, national or ethnic origins, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability” (art. 1, par. 1). Additional legislative and policy measures and initiatives demonstrate a determination from the part of the current government and the civil society to combat deep-rooted racism. Still, the lack of conceptual clarity and coherence in many legal documents may lead to arbitrary interpretations and unequal treatment, as we will see next. “You are born Greek, you don’t become Greek” is the phrase that summarises the prevalent criteria for granting Greek citizenship. With the exception of the first constitutions drafted during the war of independence (1821-1832) from the Ottoman Empire, which combined territorial, religious, linguistic, and origin criteria in the determination of a Greek national, all subsequent laws have been predominantly based on the principle of *ius sanguinis*, with very few exceptions based on *ius soli* (Christopoulos, 2006). In 2010, after years of protest from migrant communities and human rights organisations and a year of public deliberation on a draft bill, a new immigration law endeavored to establish that the children of legally residing immigrants who were either born in Greece or had completed 6 years of schooling could become Greek citizens. By that time, an estimated 200,000 children of migrants, who were born in Greece or had migrated there at a very young age, had no official documentation and were deprived of the fundamental right of freedom of movement. The fervent public and political debate around this law revealed the long-established understandings of Greekness in terms of ethnotic origins, an emerging islamophobia and mistrust of multiculturalism, and the perception of migrants as persons of ambiguous moral qualities due to their previous status of illegality (Andreouli et al., 2017; Figgou, 2016). At the same time, others argued for progressive regulatory frameworks and appealed to European humanitarianism and tolerance, or conversely to an ideal of organised Western societies with efficient but strict migration policies. In 2013, the State Council declared the provision concerning

migrant children unconstitutional on the grounds, among other, that it merely enacted formal criteria for citizenship without providing for a genuine bond with the Greek state and society, seen as an enduring unit with a certain cultural background. Two years later, in 2015, an amended and more conservative version of the 2010 law, which emphasised schooling in the sense of cultural bonds and removed birthright citizenship for second-generation immigrants, was passed by the parliament. Yet, the lack of comprehensive immigration policies and the complex exclusionary naturalisation procedures still prohibit the social integration of migrants, and sustain the status of precariousness and the stereotype of criminality for hundreds of thousands of people. The persistent differential treatment between persons of Greek descent – *homogeneis*, of the same *genos* - and persons of other descent - *allogeneis*, of different *genos* - in the Greek Code of Nationality provides a good case for considering how citizenship acquisition (or withdrawal) processes become a tool for discriminatory practices and reinforce the conception of an ethnoracially homogeneous society. Although the two categories have historically remained rather vague and thus serving diverse political and ideological aims of the Greek State, the term *homogeneis* generally refers to someone who belongs to the Greek nation through common national consciousness in terms of language, religion, common traditions, and customs. However, in practice, the principle of descent from a Greek national suffices for inclusion, while the ambiguous concept of national consciousness has previously been used to exclude both individuals with left-wing affiliations, as well as members of ethnic minorities (Christopoulos, 2006).

In the current legal framework, the conditions of naturalisation for *homogeneis* are remarkably less strict, expensive, and time-consuming than the ones applying to individuals of other descent. This summary procedure, often called definition of nationality, may arguably be seen as at odds with the fundamental principle of equality irrespective of ethnoracial criteria upheld by international law. This principle has been grossly and systematically violated in the case of mass denationalisations mainly affecting Turkish members of the only officially recognised minority of Greece, the Muslims of Western Thrace, protected by the

1923 Treaty of Lausanne (Sitaropoulos, 2004). On the basis of the differentiation between citizens of Greek and no Greek descent, a recently annulled provision of the nationality law, allowed for the withdrawal of nationality from allogeneis who left the Greek territory with no intent to return. As a result, 60,004 people lost their nationality on arbitrary grounds from 1955 to 1998 in an attempt to legally substantiated ethnic cleansing (Sitaropoulos, 2004). Ever since the annulment, the denationalised minority members have not been reinstated and a significant number leaves as stateless persons within Greek territory having the option to follow the naturalisation process for foreigners. This absurd and long episode in Greek legal history has traumatized the relationships between the minority, the local communities, and the State, and remains as evidence of the serious repercussions of institutionalised racism.

Compared to other countries, Greece has been a relatively homogenous country speaking from an ethnic, religious and linguistic point of view. Starting with the 1980s, Greece, traditionally a country of emigration, has become a country for thousands of immigrants and refugees.

The new demographic patterns are increasingly affecting the composition of the society.

The largest part of the population is Greek Orthodox. The other remaining part is Muslims. Greek citizens who are Muslims live in the farthest north-eastern area of Greece and on the island of Rhodes. Greece's recognized Muslim minority make up more than 1 per cent of the Greek population – a figure that does not include hundreds of thousands of undocumented Muslim migrants originating from outside the country – with most concentrated in Western Thrace, the province bordering Turkey. Many identify themselves as Turks, although they are of different origins, including Muslim Roma/Gypsies and Pomaks or Muslim Slavs: previous official estimates have suggested that of around 100,000 members of the Muslim minority, around 50 per cent were Turks, 35 per cent Pomaks and 15 per cent Roma. Pomaks reside mainly in villages in the Rhodope Mountains in Thrace. Their dialects are usually classified as dialects of Bulgarian, although most

Pomaks themselves self-identify as Turks, whose welfare is actively promoted by the Turkish government.

Under Greek law, the Muslim minority (including Pomaks) has a right to education in its own language. In practice, however, only Turkish is used. This is due to the Turkish self-identification of the Pomaks, and the fact that this trend was promoted until recently by the Greek authorities (who from 1968 until the 1980s even officially recognized the Pomaks as Turks) in order to distance them from Bulgarians. In 1952, the Greek state introduced Turkish-language education for the Pomak children. Apart from this, Greek governments have been indifferent and have done little to integrate the Pomaks or protect their interests. Minority languages can be used by local authorities and in courts, and under Greek law, interpreters will be provided. Nevertheless, most Pomaks will speak Turkish on such occasions. Most Pomaks are fluent in their Pomak dialects (spoken amongst themselves), Turkish (their language of education and the main language of the Muslim minority), Greek (the official language of the Greek state), and many know some Arabic (the language of the Qur'an).

Since the 1920s, according to the terms of the Treaty of Sevres (1920) and Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the Greek Muslim minority have been subject to Shari'a law in matters such as inheritance, divorce and other family matters. In January 2018, however, the Greek government annulled this provision, allowing Greek Muslims the opportunity to pursue claims through secular courts instead. A Greek Muslim widow had brought a case concerning her inheritance to the European Court of Human Rights after a Greek court had ruled that only a mufti, an Islamic legal scholar, could decide on the matter. Following an initiative by the government of Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Muslims can now choose whether they wish to turn to Sharia or secular courts.

The self-identification of Western Thrace's Muslims continues to be politicized, with Turkey insisting that the majority of the Muslim population are ethnically Turkish, while Greece claims that a large number are Pomak.

A further crucial issue for ethnic Turkish and other minority associations is that they have been unable to register formally. These cases strike at the heart of the right to self-identification for members of minorities in Greece, where the right to collective identity is denied to the Turkish minority, who are only counted as part of a larger Muslim minority. In fact, the Greek authorities have closed several

associations which had the word ‘Turkish’ in their names. In July 2018, despite winning their case before the European Court of Human Rights, the Turkish Union of Xanthi had their application rejected yet again by a Greek appeals court. This was despite legislation adopted by the Greek parliament to allow associations to reapply for registration despite prior rejections.<sup>1</sup>

Though Greece does not collect official data on ethnicity, it does disaggregate foreign nationals by citizenship. According to the 2011 census, there were around 912,000 permanent foreign residents in Greece, including Albanians (480,851), Bulgarians (75,917), Romanians (46,524), Pakistanis (34,178), Georgians (27,407), Ukraine (17,008) as well as smaller groups from the UK, Cyprus, Poland, Russia, India, Bangladesh, Germany, Egypt, Moldova and the Philippines. However, these figures do not reflect the substantial proportion of undocumented workers in the country (estimated by one study at the time of the census to make up a third of the actual immigrant population) or naturalized individuals born outside Greece who have later Greek citizenship. Nor does it reflect the implications of Greece’s economic recession on migrant populations – tens of thousands of Albanians have reportedly returned to their home country in the wake of the recession – and the shifting demographic of asylum seekers and migrants from 2015. As of May 2018, Greece was hosting than 60,000 refugees, primarily from Syria, Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Though their exact size is uncertain, other minorities include Vlachs (200,000), Arvanites (95,000), ethnic Macedonians (100,000–200,000), Roma/Gypsies (265,000), Turks 90,000, Pomaks (35,000– 40,000) and Jews (5,000).

## Roma minority

Official publications estimate the Roma population in Greece numbering around 265,000. Most of the Roma are Orthodox Christians and are dispersed throughout the country. Many Muslim Roma live in Macedonia and Western Thrace.

## Historical context

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<sup>1</sup> [minorityrights.org/minorities/turks-and-pomaks/](http://minorityrights.org/minorities/turks-and-pomaks/)

Historical accounts of Roma in Greece have often reflected the community's stigmatization and contributed to their misrepresentation. Though the origins of the first Roma in Greece are uncertain, with some sources suggesting a presence as far back as the eleventh century, Roma played a significant role during the Byzantine era, fighting Ottoman forces from the mid-fourteenth century onwards. Under the Ottoman Empire, Roma experienced widespread segregation and stigmatization. Some Roma converted to Islam, though the majority in what is now present day Greece did not. Roma played an important role in the Greek uprising against Ottoman rule and after independence, though this remains largely unrecognized.

As elsewhere in Europe during World War II, Greece's Roma were persecuted by the Nazis and many were killed in Greece or deported to Auschwitz. . Although exact figures are unknown, 300 Greek Roma are recorded to have been detained by the occupying forces in early 1942. Further mass detentions followed, and only a few of those taken survived. While plans for mass round-ups and transports to Auschwitz were laid aside in 1943 following the interventions of Archbishop Damaskinos and Prime Minister Ioannis Rallis, Roma living in areas under direct German control were killed or sent to Auschwitz. After the war, Greek authorities were slow to move towards recognition of Greek citizenship until 1955, when the first legislative steps to grant Greek citizenship were taken. To this day, however, the special rights for minorities provided for in the Lausanne Treaty, such as the right to education in one's mother tongue, do not apply to most Roma – the only exception being Roma Muslims who are classified as part of the country's 'Muslim minority'.

### **Current issues**

As is the case in many European countries, the estimated 265,000 Roma in Greece regularly experience marginalization and stigmatization. This is evident in a wide range of areas, from housing and education to access to health care and unemployment. Segregation, whether in the classroom, workplace or wider society, remains pervasive. While there have been some signs of progress to their situation, this remains limited, and the community continues to experience significantly higher levels of poverty and exclusion: 30 per cent lack access to adequate sanitation, and unemployment levels among Roma youth (16-24) are as high as 60 per cent. There has been no official recognition of their ethnicity and



their language. In the majority, either is muslim or Christian, has been recognized the Greek citizenship.

Although the government's National Strategy for Social Integration of Roma focuses on improving the integration and living conditions of Roma, the community still faces high levels of physical segregation, discrimination and negative stereotypes. In October 2015, after a two-year trial, charges against Roma couple Christos Salis and Eleftheria Dimopoulou – accused of stealing a 4-year-old child named Maria – were dropped, when the court ruled that evidence against the couple was inconclusive. This is a significant step forward in the struggle to debunk myths and stereotypes attached to the Roma minority, such as the one that accuses them of kidnapping children.

In May 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere, declared that 'Roma of Greece, while being for the vast majority Greek citizens, continue to face discrimination and remain economically and socially vulnerable.' The most concerning aspects were highlighted as being housing, social care and health services. As most Roma settlements are not connected to Greece's national power grid, it is impossible for Roma people to register with local authorities as they are unable to provide gas or electricity bills as proof of residence. For the same reason, Roma children living in informal camps are not able to complete primary school education. A 2015 study conducted by Antigone, an anti-racism information centre in Thessaloniki, analysed the discrimination that can also take place within Roma communities: varying educational attainment, financial status, religious beliefs and cultural practices are said to be key contributing factors, with Roma women facing gender-based discrimination as well.

Many Roma live in sub-standard housing with inadequate water supply and sewage facilities on the periphery of urban areas and on the edge of small towns and villages. Roma have also been subject to racist abuse and violence. In November 2014, three men were convicted of a violent racist attack on a Roma woman Paraskevi Kokoni and her nephew in the town of Etoliko, western Greece, in the previous year. The victim believed that she was targeted because she is a relative of a leader of the local Roma community. This attack did not occur in isolation, but in the context of a series of threats and attacks attributed to members and supporters of the extreme right-wing Golden Dawn party. More

recently, in June 2017, an outbreak of anti-Roma violence occurred in Attika following the accidental death of a boy, apparently from a bullet fired in the air by a local Roma: police subsequently had to halt a large crowd of protestors from firebombing the Roma community.

On 2 August 2018, Roma Genocide Remembrance Day was commemorated for the first time in Greece. Community leaders were joined by government and Orthodox Church representatives.

## Refugees and migrants question

Since 2015 Greece is confronted with a multifaceted refugee crisis.

According to the data published by the Greek Ministry of Migration Policy, as of January 2019, three of the five RICs on the Greek islands were filled over their capacity, in some cases severely so. Following the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement in 2016, the Greek islands have become increasingly overcrowded and conditions have severely deteriorated, particularly on Lesbos, Samos, and Chios. In the RIC on Samos near the town of Vathy, the facility, which was initially built with a capacity for 648 people, now houses around 4000 asylum seekers. The camp is infested with vermin, and many residents suffer from bites from rats and bed bugs. Scabies is also very common among camp residents. According to Still I Rise, students often miss class, forced instead to queue to see a medic after sustaining serious rat bites. The rats frequently enter the tents where residents live and destroy residents' belongings: "A student asked if we could give him a new backpack as he left his in his tent and forgot some food in it, so the rats living in his tent destroyed it to get to the food."

Subsequent to the closure of the Balkan Route in March 2016, accommodation sites were rapidly opened across mainland Greece to accommodate the

approximately 60,000 asylum seekers in Greece, including approximately 10,000 who were evacuated from the ad hoc camp at Idomeni in Northern Greece. According to eyewitness accounts, asylum seekers evacuated from Idomeni were brought to multiple sites around Thessaloniki, including to former factories, warehouses, and industrial buildings. At Softex/Karamanlis camp, in Thessaloniki, asylum seekers were brought to a site in which tents had not been erected, and where there was no available drinking water.

High concern was expressed that Greece may have acted in breach of the principle of non-refoulement during 2018-2019. More specifically the reports refer to repeated allegations of summary forced returns of asylum seekers and migrants-including also Turkish nationals- intercepted at the sea and at the land border with Turkey in the northeastern Egean region, with no prior risk assessment of their personal circumstances. According to the information provided from NGO, Greek law enforcement officers were involved in push-back operations often using violence by destroying the migrants belongings.<sup>2</sup>

During 2018-2019 a new asylum system was set up in line with European International standards. During this period the Asylum Service had registered 234,536 applications for international protections and the average recognition rate for refugee status stood almost 44 per cent. Asylum seekers hosted in Reception and Identification Centers are obliged to remain on the islands unless their cases are deemed eligible to be further examined under the so called regular procedure in the mainland because of their vulnerability or for family reunification under the Dublin 111 Regulation. As well as long waiting periods for an initial asylum interview, almost one out of three applications in Greece is pending for more than six months, according to the Greek Council for Refugees.<sup>26</sup> An illustrative example is S, an applicant from Uganda, considered vulnerable under Greek Law by KEELPNO. S applied for international protection at the end of 2018 and is scheduled to be interviewed in February 2021, more than 25 months

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.humanrights360.org/the-new-normality-continuous-push-backs-of-third-country-nationals-on-the-evros-river/>

after his registration. Another example is F, an applicant from Iran who has been on Samos for more than eight months. His interview at the beginning of February 2019 was postponed without any stated reason or a new interview being scheduled. A major and persistent issue is the so-called 'Skype procedure' for initial asylum registration on the mainland. For several years now, the only route available to those arriving in Greece through mainland routes (i.e. not via the islands, where there is a separate process) is to register as an asylum seeker and to obtain an interview date is to contact the Greek Asylum Service (GAS) over Skype.<sup>27</sup> This service is currently available in 13 different languages, and an asylum seeker must use their own Skype account to call the correct GAS Skype ID matching their language, within a narrow time slot provided in a weekly schedule that changes regularly. A corollary issue is the structural discrimination built into the Skype system by offering the service only in 13 languages (as of June 2019, these are: English, French, Arabic, Farsi, Kurmanji, Sorani, Pashto, Albanian, Bengali, Hindi, Georgian, Russian and Ukrainian), which blocks those who do not speak one of the designated languages from clear routes to accessing asylum. In one 2018 case reported by an anonymous aid worker in Koutsochero camp in mainland Greece, a Somali-speaking man had resided in the camp for four months and had not yet been able to register as an asylum seeker as Skype is not offered in Somali, nor had he been able to access assistance from either the UNHCR or camp authorities, as he was unable to communicate with them. The man was eventually instructed by the SMS agency on site to travel to the asylum office in Athens and present himself in person to register. However, upon arrival at the GAS office, the man was repeatedly turned away, and after several days of sleeping on the street, he returned to the camp (at his own expense) only to find that in his absence he had been de-registered and had lost his accommodation status as a resident, which had the corollary effect of also removing him from the cash assistance programme.

In comparison with previous years police violence against refugees and asylum seekers has been increased. On Samos, this violence appears to be so commonplace that Samos Volunteers comments that "There are constant reports

of ill-treatment by the police towards the asylum seekers. It has become par for the course on the island.”. Information provided by Samos Volunteers.<sup>3</sup> Information provided by Samos Volunteers. observes “everyone who goes through the police station on Samos is constantly yelled at and called [the pejorative term] ‘malaka’, at least.” Refugees from African countries are reportedly treated with particularly brutal force by the police. On Samos, seven asylum seekers were arrested following peaceful demonstrations in January and February 2019. In January, during five days of peaceful demonstrations organised by the African community to ask for more timely and fair assessments of their asylum cases, the police closed off the exit points of the camp. The demonstrators marched to the camp management offices, at which point several were reportedly physically assaulted.<sup>50</sup> In another incident, Samos Volunteers reported that the police severely beat people who were restless while waiting in a distribution line for shoes and clothes.<sup>4</sup>

There are several first-hand accounts from anonymous sources that on at least several occasions in the Moria hotspot, police officers enlisted Afghan asylum seekers to conduct crowd control during food distribution. They would instruct asylum seekers to arm themselves with metal poles or sticks and enforce order in return for faster asylum procedures and transfers to the mainland. Other reports on police violence include humiliation of asylum seekers where they were forced to strip naked during interrogations or interventions.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, actors on the ground report the regular use of chemical irritants during protests, use of chemical irritants in close quarters, regular intervention and excessive force used

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.samos24.gr/7-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BD%CE%B7-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%B9/>

<sup>4</sup> Reported in Samos24: <https://www.samos24.gr/7-%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%84%CE%B1%CE%BD%CE%AC%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B5%CF%82-%CF%83%CF%84%CE%B7-%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9%CE%BF%CF%83%CF%8D%CE%BD%CE%B7-%CE%B3%CE%B9%CE%B1-%CF%84%CE%B1-%CE%B5%CF%80%CE%B5%CE%B9/>

by riot police, arbitrary violence against asylum seekers regardless. They [the police] would instruct asylum seekers to arm themselves with metal poles or sticks and enforce order in return for faster asylum procedures and transfers to the mainland. Aid organisations on Samos have reported that police are charging 50 euros in order to register complaints. Whether they are active participants during the protest, violence against asylum seekers even after they have submitted to police or following their arrest, violence against unaccompanied children in the unaccompanied children's area, and negligence towards unaccompanied children during fires and arson attacks. In particular, aid organisations on Samos have reported that police are charging 50 euros in order to register complaints. Other anonymous sources have reported the same phenomenon on the mainland, but in the even higher amount of 100 euros. This means refugees and asylum seekers, in particular vulnerable women and children, may be effectively barred from recourse to redress for crimes committed against them.

The poor overall living conditions for refugees in Greece – and the extended periods spent in waiting – are particularly unsuitable for children, and there are a significant number of unaccompanied children in many camps at heightened risk. In Chios, 50% of the children interviewed by RRE in May 2018 were unaccompanied, with 72.4% of all children reporting that they have family somewhere in Europe, meaning they may be eligible for family reunification under the Dublin Regulation. As of July 2019, the UNHCR reports a worrying 433 unaccompanied children living in the Moria RIC.

During 2018, HumanRights360 observed that detention of UASCs was systematically imposed and was prolonged for periods ranging from a few days to more than two months, pending their transfer to an accommodation facility. UASCs and other vulnerable persons were detained in both police stations and the RIC of Fylakio in so-called “protective custody” in unacceptable detention conditions.<sup>6</sup> In a large number of cases, including UASCs and other vulnerable

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ecre.org/greece-detention-remains-a-systematic-and-arbitrary-practice/>

persons, there are allegations of informal forcible removals (push-backs) from Greece to Turkey at the Evros river border.<sup>64</sup> The situation is particularly serious in Moria on Lesbos where children spend on average five months in the hotspot before they can move to the mainland.<sup>65</sup> There is an acute lack of available care, particularly mental healthcare, coupled with pervasive substance abuse amongst children, who are often experiencing severe trauma. Throughout Greece, a large number of incidences have been reported, in which authorities have failed to correctly register children at the outset of the asylum procedure. In an example provided by a legal aid organisation operating on one of the islands, a child declared his age to be 17 during his initial registration but was registered as an adult (he said "2002"; they reportedly wrote "2000"). He reportedly corrected them immediately, and was told "don't worry, you tell them at your interview." Six months later, he still had not received an interview date and was living in the camp with adult males. He reported multiple, repeated incidents of rape, and had not yet been given an appointment either for age determination or received a consultation. Furthermore, his asylum claim was based on a history of sexual abuse and violence. He had not been able to access any psychological support despite being clearly traumatised. Furthermore, his sexually transmitted diseases and injuries as a result of ongoing sexual violence went untreated, despite having asking to see the camp doctor.

Organisations report that there is a chronic lack of appropriate accommodation for UASCs across Greece, which means many of them are forced to stay in the RIC on islands for extended periods of time. To illustrate this problem, at the time of writing, there is an unaccompanied child who has been on Samos for a year and five months. Even when transferred on to the mainland, some shelters have rules stating that if children are out of the shelter/hotel for over 24 hours they are not allowed back in again. This often leaves them homeless. Furthermore, there is no referral pathway or system for them to be put back on the shelter allocation system run by National Center for Social Solidarity (EKKA Greece). In other cases, due to the lack of spaces available in shelters, children are simply transferred from the islands to so-called "safe zones" (often, just several designated

containers) within accommodation centres on the mainland, many of which are located in remote areas and which may lack appropriate facilities for UASCs. In 2018 in Koutsochero camp near Larissa, children aged 16-17 were not able to access formal education, as it was not available for their age level.

There has been, also, a reported increase in hate crime incidents against refugees and asylum seekers in Greece. 68 In particular, there have been several incidences in which far right organisations have organised demonstrations against the refugee population on the islands, which have often turned violent, with reports of racist attacks. Organisations also report that across the islands, there has been an increase in reports of discrimination by locals against refugees, often refusing them entry to shops and cafes.<sup>69</sup> In other cases, refugees have been refused medical care, seemingly motivated by racist views. In one particular incident a pregnant woman went to visit the hospital on Samos, but was turned away by the midwife who reportedly told her that she “does not treat black people because they are too loud.

Similarly, there are issues related to racial discrimination and xenophobia within the context of children’s access to education. Under Greek law, children have to meet two official requirements in order to go to school: a set of vaccinations and an official address. In Samos, all children residing in the camp received vaccines (largely through a campaign by Médecins Sans Frontières), and the hotspot now has an official address. Despite meeting the requirements, parents declared that they would not allow their children to be in the same class with refugees, that they “were dirty”, “did not know where they came from,” and that they “did not know anything about their living conditions.” Parents declared that they would physically bar refugee children access to the school and would forcibly remove them if they entered. As a result, there are only a handful of refugee children going to school Photo credit: Zsuzsánna Fodor on Samos. Approximately 14 of them have to attend school after the Greek children have departed, in order not to interact with them, thus segregating the refugee community even more.



## Islamophobia

Currently in Greece as elsewhere, the politics of distribution of migrants, asylumseekers and refugees is a field where state policies both produce and are inspired by various xenophobic and segregationist narratives that coagulate chiefly around Islamophobia as yet another expression of the racialization of certain populations. The widely circulating (in Greece and generally in Europe) xenophobic narrative of “Muslim cultural invasion” is, of course, another version of the official discourse, upheld by high-level policy figures, which transforms refugees to a security risk<sup>8</sup> by claiming that Muslim terrorists, radicalised individuals, or terrorist sympathizers regularly infiltrate refugee populations.

Images of the “radical” Islam as politically threatening, culturally inferior and incompatible with “modern values”, were first introduced to Greece by the media as a result of September 11 and the War on Terror (cf. Kirtsoglou 2013). Gradually, Islamophobic attitudes expanded and became dominant in public discourse.

Modern Greek phobic and ambivalent attitudes towards migrant populations are not, of course, unrelated to the hegemonic dogma of Greek political elites that Greece – culturally, economically and historically – belongs to the West (cf. Kirtsoglou 2006). The Western, liberal orientation of Greek national culture crystallised in popular ideology in a fashion that supported ambivalent and often hostile attitudes towards “oriental others” (compare with Virdee 2014).

A privileged source for the spread of Islamophobia is, as expected, the Greek Right with its most important representant being Golden Dawn. The organization had sporadic cases of Islamization of Greece before 2015.

However, the refugee flow has allowed Islamophobia to reconcile with two mainstream perceptions: the aversion of immigrants of all origins and the privileged hostility to Turkey and its alleged intentions to destroy Hellenism.

liberal Islamophobia

More importantly, Islamophobia concerns far-right and conservative people in Greece. It is absent from the left-wing public discourse, and the majority of liberal, center-left or center-right groups condemn the phenomenon.

Nevertheless, it has to be noted in recent years - and after the terrorist attacks in Europe - a distinctly liberal, Islamophobic discourse. It focuses not so much on Islam's danger to Hellenism but on the threat to the European legacy of Enlightenment, open societies and human rights. It is a milder version of Islamophobia that recognizes moderate and extremist currents within Islam, while the Turkish danger, on the other hand, is completely absent, as are the associated correlations with refugees.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://cik.leeds.ac.uk/>«Prevailing Narratives of Muslim Hatred Research Report, Country Report: Greece».