SOLIDARITY UNITY

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Solidarity & Unity is an Amsterdam-based NGO focused on uncovering violations of human rights across all corners of the globe. The NGO is dedicated to building peaceful, just, and livable societies. They develop human-centered, empathy-based approaches to address social challenges. The scope of this report concerns the uncovering of the treatment of refugee women and children within the nation of Greece for the 2026 United Nations Universal Periodic Review. The main three violations this report will focus on are the denial of asylum for refugees, the inadequate conditions of detention facilities for women, and the gaps between child refugee protection legislation and actual practice. The main method of data collection is primarily desk research, with sources such as the UN, NGOs, and other actors within civil society. All data used is current and accurate

Legal Framework

In considering the treatment of refugee women and children within Greece, there are several legal instruments which guide treatment and what measures are applicable. Firstly, International law forbids the use of refoulement, the pushback of refugee boats from reaching shore. Secondly, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides regulations regarding child detention and their rights to receive education. Lastly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) provides protection for women from gender discrimination and violence.

In addition to international legal regulation, the EU likewise provides a legal framework when dealing with the migration of refugees into Europe. The Reception Conditions Directive ensures a unified standard that member states must follow, such as material support and housing. Furthermore, the EU's Frontex regulation provides the EU's border control with rules when dealing with refugees, such as the obligation to process asylum of arrived individuals.

In regards to Greece 2021 UPR recommendations, the country is currently failing to implement improvement to the various areas that the UN has designated as issues within their migration and border policy.

Violation I - Denial of Access to Asylum and Border Pushbacks: Impact on Women and Girls

Denial of individual access to asylum committed by Greek border forces is not an isolated incident, but rather remains an ongoing systematic force in Greece's handling of incoming refugees (Asylum Information Database 2025). Within several observed cases, women and children undergo a 'single-gendered' response in the reception of refugees, denying them access to special asylum procedures that would ensure that vulnerable groups are evaluated under different criteria. These structural gaps in refugee intake procedures have the potential to lead to scenarios where women and children are subject to sexual violence and physical violance. Furthermore, despite accepting the demand to stop border pushback of refugee boats in the 2021 universal periodic review (UPR) recommendation, Greece features this tactic frequently in their handling of refugees.

In regards to the limiting of asylum to incoming refugees, UN officials still remain concerned about the large-scale pushback operations occurring, despite the Greek government's pledge to ensure that human rights remain at the forefront of their operations (UN Human Rights Committee 2024a). As of 2024, the UN has recorded over 1,400 border incidents, impacting the lives of over 45,000 refugees (UN Human Rights Committee 2024b). While the Greek government has taken steps to introduce legislation aimed at improving the asylum process for women (UN Human Rights Committee 2024a), application of these laws remains to be observed on a permanent basis (UN Human Rights Committee 2024a). In the case that refugees are able to successfully land on Greek shores, local authorities have demonstrated that they are not opposed to conducting questionable deportation operations, demonstrated by the court case of a female refugee who was stripped of her belongings by Greek border patrol and forced on a boat back to Turkey (Human Rights Watch 2025a). Following this ruling, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) stated that Greek authorities participate in systematic use of pushbacks and ignoring protection requests for vulnerable groups (ARE).

The denial of asylum access is detrimental to women and children's wellbeing, as a majority of them arrive from countries where they have little legal protection and support mechanisms (Asylum Information Database 2025). In July of 2025, the Greek government instituted a three month suspension on the intake of refugees, with no exemption for women or children, regardless of the fact if they were victims of sexual or physical violence (Human Rights Watch 2025b). Women and children arriving from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, and Syria are under threat of being returned to situations where they may face forced marriages and legal persecution for violating societal norms. While the ECtHR introduced an injunction against Greece, requiring them to not limit asylum procedures for those

already landed, Greece still participates in the tightening of their migration policy. Looking more specifically at the effects that Greek refugee intake policy has on women and children, reports from the Greek Refugee Council found that there were little to no special screening processes for women and children upon arrival (Greek Council for Refugees 2024a). Furthermore, medical screenings do not include assessment of potential vulnerabilities or specific individual needs (Greek Council for Refugees 2024a, 13).
Greece's use of systemic pushback operations violates article 33 of the Refugee Convention, the use of refoulement practices when interacting with refugees. Furthermore, the mistreatment of refugees by Greek authorities puts Greece in violation of Article 3 of the ECtHR, demonstrated in the court case A.R.E v. Greece, the violation of A.R.E's right to humane treatment. Finally, the blanket suspension of asylum intake in July 2025 likewise puts Greece in violation of EU law, violating the EU charter of fundamental human rights, the right to seek asylum.

Violation II - Inadequate Reception Conditions for Women and Girls
Reception conditions for incoming refugees in Greece are severely deficient in quality and produce an unsafe environment for women and children. This leads to scenarios where they are put at risk of physical and sexual violence. The CCAS Samos reception center was recently found to be in violation by the ECtHR for its inhumane conditions (Save the Children 2025). At this point in time, there are two main issues which are plaguing women and children within Greek reception centers. Physical conditions such as overcrowding, lack of sanitation and isolation; and procedural issues such as the fact that sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) do not offer any special protections in asylum admittance.
According to UN officials in their observation of reception facilities, the Greek government is failing in the protection of women from gender based violence in refugee camps (UN CEDAW), primarily due to lack of effort in providing support resources and reporting mechanisms (UN CEDAW). Furthermore, the risk of human trafficking of women and girls by malicious actors remains high, mainly due to the lack of recognition within the Greek penal code regarding how consent may hide trafficking of women into prostitution services (UN CEDAW).
In addition to substandard qualities within Greek facilities, refugee residents are experiencing a lack of financial allowance to cover certain necessities and basic goods or services. According to a 2024 report by the NGO Refugee Support Aegean (RSA), out of the 24,000 refugees eligible to receive financial support, none of the applicants have received cash assistance (Refugee Support Aegean 2025a). RSA claims that this is due to Greece's inability to manage EU-funded support. Lack of financial support has the potential to force more and more women into 'sex-for'sale' services to cover expenses. In addition, overcrowding remains an issue for women, as they make up a smaller size of the arrivals compared to men (Refugee Support Aegean 2025a).
Despite condemnation and injunctions from the ECtHR (Refugee Support Aegean 2025b), Greece has yet to improve facility conditions for female refugees, therefore stalling advancement in overall improvement. Multiple facilities are lacking in medical care access, such as the employment of healthcare personnel, lack in funding from the Greek government on gender-based services, and issues in interpretation services which would allow women to report problems more frequently (Refugee Support Aegean 2025b). Overall facility conditions for women, and refugees as a whole, have not significantly improved from 2021.
In regards to Greek operating of refugee housing and intake facilities, several legal frameworks have been violated since the previous UPR submission. Greece is demonstrated to be in breach of CEDAW Articles. 2 & 6, failing to ensure that women in housing facilities are not being trafficked or forced to participate in prostitution or indentured servitude. Secondly, Greece is failing to carry out the EU Reception Conditions Directive Articles. 11 & 17–20, by not consistently providing refugees with financial support.
Overall, Greece has not implemented the 2021 UPR recommendations in regard to upholding facility quality and safety. Since 2021, Greece has been found in violation by the ECtHR in regards to conditions at the Samos facility, and have been condemned by the NGOs for failing to improving the well being of female refugees right to protection from sexual assault (Refugee Support Aegean 2025b).

Violation III - Children's Rights: Detention, Guardianship Gaps, and Denial of Services
Following the 2021 UPR recommendations, Greece has demonstrated improvement in the creation of child protection legislation for refugee children. One such act, the guardianship scheme for unaccompanied children, produced positive results in its first year protecting around 2,414 children in 2024 (UNICEF Greece 2025a). While Greece demonstrates willingness to improve the protection of refugee children, there remains a significant gap between legislative direction and actual practice in Greek refugee policy (UNICEF Greece 2025a). Instances involving the detention of refugee

children without guardianship presence, lack of education or enrichment opportunities, and poor housing accommodation while they potentially wait for permanent shelter have been recorded (UNICEF Greece 2025a).
In 2024, Human Rights Committee experts of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) praised Greek protection efforts towards vulnerable groups, marking a significant milestone to the protection of children's rights (UN Human Rights Committee 2024b). However, experts still remain concerned regarding short term detention of children, and its impact on disproportionately limiting their right to liberty (UN Human Rights Committee 2024b).
Violation of refugee child rights is a recurring issue in Greek migration policy, with reports from local NGOs noting cases of unaccompanied children without guardianship, and their exposure to inadequate conditions (Refugee Support Aegean and Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2025). In June 2025, The ECtHR condemned Greece following reports that the rights of 39 children had been violated, stating that they were in violation of Articles 3 and 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Refugee Support Aegean and Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2025). Despite condemnation from European courts, application of policy has failed to materialize as there are still over 400 children in camps still without guardianship (Refugee Support Aegean and Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2025). The Samos facility is just one example of conditions that children are exposed to, with large overcrowding of children occurring within the facility (Save the Children 2025). Joint findings from 42 civil society organizations found that out of the 200 person capacity, 500 children currently reside at the facility. Furthermore, children have been recorded to have slept on floors, and share six bathrooms amongst the population (Save the Children 2025).
In terms of statistical data, evidence shows that child detention and denial of education opportunities are systemic issues within Greek migration and border policy. In 2024, out of 3,017 detention extensions reviewed by a court, fewer than 13 (0.43%) cases were found to be unlawful and rejected by Greek courts (Refugee Support Aegean 2024Refugee Support Aegean and Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2025). Furthermore, school attendance rates for children residing in Greek asylum camps were almost nonexistent from 2023 to current day (Refugee Support Aegean and Equal Rights Beyond Borders 2025).
The treatment of refugee children by Greek border patrol puts Greece in violation of several different articles of the CRC. Most notability. Greece at the moment is in violation of articles 3, 22, 28, and 37. These violations have to do with Greece failing to ensure adequate conditions and resources for all unaccompanied children across all of their housing facilities.
With the evidence in mind, this report notes that Greece has only partially implemented its recommendation following the 2021 UPR recommendations. Greece has made strides to pass legislation guaranteeing the rights and protection of refugee children. However, implementation is insufficient across Greek migration and border policy. Gaps between legislation and practice remain large, and UN observers note that there is little progress being made

Recommendations

For violation one, this report has determined that Greece has not implemented the 2021 UPR recommendations on border pushbacks and asylum treatment. As a result, this paper has produced two recommendations. Firstly, cease pushback operations effective immediately and allow for fair and transparent asylum procedures. Secondly, Greece must fully establish and implement a gender-monitoring body. This body would be tasked with ensuring that women and children are being offered the possibility to undergo a separate asylum process, with the goal to reduce domestic and sexual violence, and any other vulnerability.
In regards to violation two, this report puts forward the following recommendations with the aim of elevating the current conditions of Greek facilities. Firstly, Greece must adopt mandatory SGBV response protocol across all facilities with independent oversight by 2027, aiming to combat violence against women. Secondly, Greece must restore uninterrupted cash assistance in an effort to crack down on self-trafficking of women into indentured servitude/prostitution. Finally, Greece must formally recognise SGBV as a reason for protection by the end of 2026, allowing more admittance of female refugees.
Lastly, for violation 3, this report offers the following recommendations. Firstly, Greece needs to assure guardians are assigned within 72 hours of identification, allowing children to receive representation and support during stressful and difficult times. Secondly, Greece needs to immediately stop the detention of unaccompanied children in police stations and adult facilities. Children need to be provided their own facilities, with the goal of providing a safe and enriching environment. Lastly, education needs to continue via a mandatory 30 day deadline for school registration. Included in this push for education amongst refugee children, Greece will be required to provide language and psychological support for those who need it.

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