

# Nea Kavala Refugee Camp: Hell in Northern Greece

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Global Research, September 03, 2019

[Samos Chronicles](#) 2 September 2019

Region: [Europe](#)

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*I cried when I heard that the Greek government said that it is going to send 1000 refugees from Moiria camp on Lesbos to Nea Kavala on the mainland. They want to relieve the pressure on the camp with all its new arrivals. I heard that the refugees to be moved were all seen as 'vulnerable'.*

I want to shout out “Don’t Go”, “please don’t go”.

I was a ‘vulnerable’ refugee on Samos and In March this year I was moved to the mainland with over 300 refugees from Samos. I was sent to the Nea Kavala Camp. I lived there for 4 months.

It is HELL.

It is CRUEL

It is SH..IT

If I had known what was waiting in this desolate camp in northern Greece I would not have moved. They would have had to carry me there by force. But I knew nothing of this camp. They told me nothing. They never asked me if I wanted to move.

When you are held on the islands like Samos you get the idea that the mainland is a better place to be. They say this a lot on Samos. The mainland has better resources and facilities than the island. This is what we hear.

As I quickly learned **THIS IS NOT TRUE AT ALL**. And yes, I want to shout this out. Please listen.

Nea Kavala Camp is one of hell’s chosen spots in Greece. And to think that this government sees it as a suitable place for vulnerable refugees shows to me how much it must hate us. Nobody should be expected to stay there.

Shock! All of us from Samos were shocked by what we found there. It was so unbelievable. In just a few days many I traveled with left the camp, disappearing in the night to try and find a better place to stay in Thessaloniki or Athens. They had nowhere to go to. Most had little money. But they wouldn’t stay.



An old photo but shows lack of shelter

First, Nea Kavala Camp is an old military airfield. It is in flat and boring countryside. There are no trees. It is isolated. It is at least a 20 minute walk to the nearest shop. The nearest village is a 40 minute walk . What you see are lines of tents and cabins with no shade and no protection.

I was in my own room in Samos town. I shared a bathroom and a kitchen. It had a washing machine. It had electricity. It had wi fi.

In Nea Kavala I was given a tent. On my own which was something ok. But no bed, no electricity, no reliable wi fi, no personal security ( my tent was robbed 4 times of food and clothes). Now I faced long queues for the toilet, for the shower and days waiting to wash my clothes. Because I was given the tent and food my monthly allowance was cut

my tent

from 150 to 90 euros. The food from the army was disgusting. I couldn't eat it or face the queues and stress in getting the food so lived for most of the time on croissants, bananas and milk from the supermarket.

Of course I had to stop my Greek classes on Samos. But in Nea Kavala there was NOTHING like that. None of the people responsible for the camp stayed at Nea Kavala. Even the Camp Manager who I got to know only came for a few hours a day. She told me she was frightened by the place. The only people there all the time were some soldiers involved with the meals and some police. The police could not be bothered with us. I reported my thefts each time to be told to go away. They were always rude and aggressive.

Nea Kavala is in the north of Greece near the border with Macedonia. It has long and cold winters. In the first few weeks it was very cold at night and we had a lot of rain. On the second night an old woman in the next tent died and I am sure the cold finished her life. We had just one blanket each. Over Easter the sewage system broke and I found a river of

sewage flowing past my tent. It took days to repair because of the holidays.

Then came the summer. We cooked in our tents. No shade. No where to get cool. Torture.

This is where they are sending over a thousand vulnerable refugees. There will be many children and older people. Their tents are waiting!



I am sure that there are other mainland camps just as bad. I just know Nea Kavala. It is not a place for human beings. The refugees being moved there must be told. The world must be told. When you now hear that refugees are being moved from the islands to the mainland don't assume that they are going to a better place. Listen to us! Don't stand by in silence. Please.

\*

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*All images in this article are from Samos Chronicles; featured image: Leaving Lesbos for Nea Kavala (Sept 2nd 2019 Ekathimerini photo)*

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