

Greek Islands Refugee Crisis: An Open Letter to Humanity Crew

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Global Research, February 18, 2020

Region: [Europe](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Law and Justice](#)

I do have better things to do with my time but after reading Humanity Crew's report of its 5 day visit to Samos in January 2020, I am angry enough to write this open letter.

From the beginning to the end, your report is full of errors.

Take your opening sentence:

“Today, the island of Samos has more refugees than it has locals; 7200 refugees and 6500 locals live in Samos.”

Wrong. Samos has a population of 32,977 according to the last census. 9,000 of whom live in Samos town where the refugees live.

What sort of ‘experts’ did you send who couldn’t get this simple fact correct?

The relationship between the residents of Samos town and the refugees is complex and dynamic. As I have written in the *Samos Chronicles* there are both positives and negatives. But unlike on Lesbos and Chios the proximity of the town is one of the most supportive factors in the life of refugees here. In simple terms it is where they can be and feel human. So every day you will see hundreds of refugees walking the short distance into the town. Some go to the various centres (Alpha, Banana House.....) others to simply walk by the shops or by the sea and others to shop. But, according to your experts,

“Moreover, notwithstanding the centers in the city, it is difficult for one to actually access the city from the ‘jungle’. The road is very rough for both people and cars to cross, which means that it is also very difficult for ambulances to reach the jungle should an emergency happen. All this means that the jungle is basically cut off from the world.”

Wrong. So very wrong. These kinds of statements strongly suggest to me that your experts did not talk to the refugees here.

No sane human being could ever dispute that the camp and jungle is an affront to humanity. In Europe today you would face criminal prosecution if you treated your pets or livestock in this way. The cruelties are almost without limit. They do not need to be exaggerated which is precisely what your experts do:

“In their visit, both Dr. Daod and Mansur observed that prostitution, drug

dealing and other illicit activities occurring inside the tents were **pervasive** throughout the entire jungle. **Many** children were left alone outside the tents, neglected, and eventually becoming subjects of harassment and assault. **Most** children were barefoot and reported not feeling the cold in their damaged, frozen feet .”This is a coping mechanism-an emotional freeze that leads to physical freeze,’ says Mansur.” (my emphasis)

No one would deny these problems but never on the scale you suggest. Refugees survive here largely through their own efforts and solidarities. Where do you talk about this? There are thousands of children in the camp and they have thousands more looking out for them.

Why didn't your experts spend time in the *Open Doors* shop? Was it because it is run by refugees for refugees? Was it because it is one of the most inspiring initiatives in the town and the best place to find out what is going on. If your experts had come to the shop and told them that most of the children had no shoes they would immediately mobilise to fix the problem. But the fact is that most children have shoes because the refugees would not tolerate them being without.

As for their recommendations it was no more than 'stating the bleeding obvious'.

And lastly, at the end of the report I find your request "Give a Gift to the refugees in Samos" but in fact this is no more than a link to your organisation's donations and fund-raising page with no mention of Samos at all. And of course no information as to the actual recipients and for what purpose these funds are to be used.

I would like to know how much you spent sending your expert team to Samos. The refugees here would like to know also. Maybe those who are considering sending you money would also like to know.

When I visited your office in Haifa about 3 years ago I came away thinking you had something important to offer.

What happened?

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