

MONTHLY REPORT | JUL 2025

ILLEGAL PUSHBACKS AND BORDER VIOLENCE REPORTS

Thematic report: **Access to shelter**

BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, Poland and France including Rigardu, Mobile Info Team, Collective Aid, Blindspots, Pushback Alarm Austria, I Have Rights, Center for Legal Aid, Mission Wings, InfoPark, Legal Centre Lesvos, We Are Monitoring and Human Rights Observers.

Cover image: Graffiti in Ušivak.
Credit: Provided to Collective Aid
by political actors.



Border Violence
Monitoring Network

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LEGAL
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Thematic report: **Access to shelter**

This is the second report in our thematic series, where we will look into overarching themes affecting people on the move across Europe.

This report looks into shelter, and the difficulties people on the move face in different European countries in accessing it. From France to Greece, from Serbia to Bosnia, this report sheds light on how state authorities fail to provide access to this most basic human right.



Graffiti in Ušivak Reception Center, Sarajevo. Credit: Collective Aid



Methodology and Terminology

REPORTING NETWORK

BVMN [1] is a collaborative project between multiple grassroots organisations and NGOs working along the Western Balkan Route and Greece, documenting violations at borders directed towards people on the move. The partners have a common website database, used as a platform to collate testimonies of illegal pushbacks which are gathered through interviews.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological process for these interviews leverages the close social contact that we have as independent volunteers with refugees and migrants to monitor pushbacks at multiple borders. When individuals return with significant injuries or stories of abuse, one of our violence reporting volunteers will sit down with them to collect their testimony. Although the testimony collection itself is typically with a group no larger than five persons, the pushback groups which they represent can exceed 50 persons. We have a standardised framework for our interview structure which blends the collection of hard data (dates, geo-locations, officer descriptions, photos of injuries/medical reports, etc.) with open narratives of the abuse.

TERMINOLOGY

The term pushback is a key component of the situation that unfolded along the EU borders (Hungary and Croatia) with Serbia in 2016, after the closure of the Balkan Route. Pushback describes the informal expulsion (without due process) of an individual or group to another country. This lies in contrast to the term “deportation”, which is conducted in a legal framework. Pushbacks have become an important, if unofficial, part of the migration regime of EU countries and elsewhere.

ABBREVIATIONS

BiH – Bosnia and Herzegovina
HRV – Croatia
SRB – Serbia
SLO – Slovenia
ROM – Romania
HUN – Hungary

AUT – Austria
MNK – North Macedonia
GRC – Greece
BGR – Bulgaria
TUR – Turkey
EU – European Union

[1] BVMN is a network of watchdog organisations active in the Balkans, Greece, Turkey, Poland and France, including Rigardu, Mobile Info Team, Collective Aid, Blindspots, Pushback Alarm Austria, I Have Rights, Center for Legal Aid, Mission Wings, Legal Centre Lesvos, We Are Monitoring, InfoPark, Human Rights Observers and Calais Food Collective



Executive summary

Our review of shelter conditions for people on the move in Europe starts in the Balkans, an analysis of shelter access reveals the downstream impact of the EU's externalisation policies.

Serbia's capacity to host people on the move has contracted significantly in recent years. While the state once maintained a wide network of asylum and reception centers, closures and consolidations now leave only a small number active. Facilities are often located in isolated areas, limiting access to services, opportunities, and integration. The system has increasingly shifted from accommodating to controlling, with centers functioning more as instruments of containment. NGOs and humanitarian groups consistently highlight the gap between state provision and actual needs. Persistent issues include poor living conditions, lack of autonomy, and neglect in medical care – sometimes resulting in preventable deaths. They also stress that the relocation of people, separation of families, and long asylum wait times exacerbate vulnerability.

Finally, in Bosnia, the reception system is undergoing consolidation, with several centres closing down. This reflects a broader pattern of managing migration infrastructure in response to fluctuating numbers rather than long-term needs. While consolidations aim to streamline resources, they risk deepening isolation, limiting access to services, and exposing residents – particularly families and minors – to heightened insecurity. Across the remaining centres, poor healthcare, inadequate hygiene, food shortages, and insecurity are common, while efforts to improve infrastructure have not addressed deeper gaps in protection and dignity. With limited alternatives available, further closures could drive more people into informal or unsafe living situations, reinforcing the precariousness of life for those on the move in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In Greece, where the state has sought to comply with its housing obligations for beneficiaries of international protection through limited integration schemes and contradicting policies. The May 2025 eviction directive forced recognised refugees and rejected asylum seekers out of state-run camps without safeguards or alternatives, leaving many at risk of homelessness or detention. The new HELIOS+ programme, designed to provide housing and integration support, was launched after a six-month gap with minimal capacity and long delays. Combined with the government's declared shift toward "disincentives," including possible cuts to financial support, these measures reflect a turn towards deterrence and exclusion.

Meanwhile, conditions inside the Closed-Controlled Access Centres (CCACs) and mainland camps remain dire. Reports from Samos, Kos, and Lesbos highlight systemic



Executive summary

issues: overcrowding, inedible food, lack of running water, unhygienic facilities, and limited healthcare. Residents face de facto detention upon arrival, prolonged isolation under degrading conditions, and insufficient protection for vulnerable people, including survivors of trafficking and pregnant women. Evictions within CCACs—sometimes moving people from containers to tents—further reduce living standards. Fire risks, power outages, and structural neglect underscore the dangers of these facilities, while access to healthcare, transport, and essential services continues to deteriorate.

With state housing schemes limited and camp conditions unlivable, many people on the move turn to informal arrangements. Yet squats, collective shelters, and temporary rentals are precarious, increasingly policed, and often unaffordable, especially on tourist islands where rents surge. For rejected asylum seekers, informality carries the added risks of arrest, detention, especially with a proposed law change that aims to dish out prison sentences to undocumented people.

We continue the report with a section on Turkey. Turkey hosts the world's largest refugee population, yet its shelter system is marked by deep structural shortcomings. The legal framework, rooted in a paradigm of temporary protection, has failed to adapt to the reality of a more long-term population. What was designed as a short-term humanitarian response now operates as a system of containment. On the other hand, the private market also offers little in terms of dignified, safe housing solutions. A deepening economic crisis has driven housing costs beyond the reach of many, forcing refugees and migrants into overcrowded, substandard, or exploitative arrangements. State policies – including restrictive registration rules, dispersal to satellite cities, and intensified securitization – compound these pressures, eroding tenant rights and creating an atmosphere of fear.

Social discrimination and rising hostility further restrict access, with landlords left at liberty to refuse to rent to foreigners, to offer totally sub-standard accommodation, and to rent at extortionate prices. Concentration in marginal neighborhoods fuels segregation and heightens vulnerability to scapegoating and violence. The result is a shelter crisis that is not merely about inadequate housing, but about structural exclusion.

We finish the report with France. In France, the state continues with its so-called “zero point of fixation” approach, which deliberately prevents people on the move from settling in one place. In Calais and Grande-Synthe, local authorities enforce cycles of displacement and insecurity through routine evictions, destruction of shelters, and criminalisation. State-provided alternatives, such as temporary transfers to distant reception centers or short-term emergency accommodation, are limited, coercive,



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and inadequate, serving more to remove people from border areas than to provide durable housing or protection. This securitisation strategy has produced instability, rights violations, and invisibilisation rather than sustainable solutions.

In contrast, NGOs and solidarity groups attempt to fill the gap with emergency relief and grassroots sheltering. They distribute tents, tarpaulins, and essentials, support informal sites, and maintain solidarity houses for the most vulnerable. Yet their capacity is consistently undermined by state evictions, which destroy supplies and dismantle shelters. Despite these efforts, the demand for dignified housing far exceeds what NGOs can provide, leaving thousands forced to sleep rough. This dynamic underscores a structural divide: while the state pursues deterrence through dispossession, NGOs focus on mitigating harm and defending the basic rights and dignity of people on the move.

UPDATE ON THE SITUATION



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Access to shelter as a basic human right

In Serbia, six accommodation facilities remain open: three Asylum Centers (Sjenica, Vranje, Obrenovac) and three Reception and Transit Centers (Preševo, Bujanovac, Principovac). Access to adequate shelter is a core human right, yet the reality in these facilities often falls short of that.

Asylum centers tend to provide relatively more stable conditions, though quality varies widely. Centers, such as Sjenica and Obrenovac, accommodate both asylum seekers and men in transit, reflecting a blurred distinction between long-term protection and temporary containment.

Reception and transit centers are designed for short stays but often house people far longer due to delays in asylum procedures or onward travel. As a result, overcrowding, insufficient sanitation, and lack of privacy are widespread. People on the move, interviewed by IOM in Bujanovac and Preševo in late 2024 described dormitory overcrowding, inadequate services, and the psychological toll of prolonged uncertainty. Civil society organizations such as Caritas, CRPC, and Indigo provide supplementary services (laundry, workshops, language classes), and UNHCR coordinates legal and psychosocial support, but systemic gaps remain. Admission criteria are inconsistently applied, vulnerability assessments are absent in reception centers, and some migrants fall into a “tolerated status,” excluded from formal shelter altogether.

In 2025, accommodation capacity in Serbia was further reduced, with several centers that had been in temporary closed permanently closing. At the start of the year, only Krnjača (for families) and Obrenovac (for single men) were functioning as asylum centers, both requiring a Certificate of Expressed Intention to Seek Asylum (police registration) for entry.

Although officially an asylum center, Sjenica also accommodated single men in transit. Bujanovac and Preševo remained temporary reception centers where registration was not required; people on the move who did not wish to seek asylum were often brought there by police after being found at unofficial locations.

In June 2025, Krnjača was closed, and families were transferred to Obrenovac, while single men from Obrenovac – including asylum seekers without work contracts – were moved to Sjenica. Referring single men from outreach in Belgrade to Sjenica still



quired a registration certificate. Since the Department for Foreigners in Belgrade is the only facility issuing these certificates, some migrants must wait 4–5 days for registration, often sleeping on the street and facing heightened security risks.

Taken together, these findings reveal a persistent gap between the right to adequate housing and the lived reality of people on the move in Serbia. Shelter too often functions as a mechanism of control rather than protection, undermining dignity and exposing individuals to conditions that compromise their health, safety, and well-being.

Placement of asylum and Temporary Reception Centers

The centers in Preševo, Bujanovac, and Vranje are located in the south of the country. Recently, BVMN member organisation Collective Aid reported encountering a group of people including minors who had been pushed back from Hungary and sent to Preševo. According to Collective Aid's field observations, this is a regularly recurring method that makes people's journey to the EU as exhausting and difficult as possible. Thus, the two Reception and Transit centers in the south are allegedly being used during push backs to force people further away from the EU borders.

The centers are located in areas that are rural or in the outskirts of cities. The consequences of placing the camps in these areas is that people have limited access to job opportunities, NGOs supporting them, public transportation, official offices, and so on. Therefore their opportunity to create a life for themselves or seek support is limited, creating additional restrictions on their freedom. By placing POM away from the rest of residents of Serbia, hidden away in rural areas, will contribute to hiding their realities and experiences from their surroundings.

Closing of Krnjača camp

There is no official statement explaining the reason for the closure of Krnjača Camp in June, however it supposedly seems to be the insecurity of the area. Collective Aid's team have been told by residents of the camp that many incidents of robberies would have been recorded here and when informed about this tendency, the police reportedly responded by simply advising them not to go out on their own.

Collective Aid observed several critical issues during the transfer of residents from one centre to another. When moving to Obrenovac people were not allowed to bring all their personal belongings – only two bags, which meant that they had to leave belongings behind. After moving the clothes were washed, supposedly due to worries of pests in the camp.



Obrenovac is a families only camp, therefore the people living together in Kranjača were separated. Single men and those not registered as asylum seekers were transferred to other camps like Sjenica, where they did not know anyone.

Conditions in Obrenovac camp

According to Collective Aid experience, people seem to be pleased with moving to Obrenovac in that sense, that they think the living conditions are better compared to how it was to live in Krnjača – for instance, Obrenovac has more space for the kids.

However, there are reportedly still major issues in this camp. One being, that people are not allowed or able to cook food at all – the only hot food they get is through the canteen and although they appreciate the food quality here, it is still taking away their independence and autonomy in everyday routines, not being able to decide to cook for themselves. According to their accounts, people living there have asked to get a common kitchen and no one replies to this. They get lunch at 1pm and dinner at 6pm everyday.



Obrenovac; Credit: Collective Aid



In Serbia, the temperatures in July have reached as high as up to 38 degrees Celsius and people have reported their rooms to be extremely hot, and that fans or other measurement to counteract these unbearable conditions is not being taken from the Commissariat site. Another complaint on the environmental note, is that there is a nearby factory, which pollutes the air, causing the air quality to be extremely poor especially at lower temperatures such as in the winter but also even in the summer at night or in the morning. Collective Aid has been told that people cannot open their windows because the rooms will be filled with the pollution that makes it painful to breathe. Besides this, the factory is also said to contribute with extremely loud noises, contributing additionally to make the camp a bad living space.



Factory Pollution; Credit: Collective Aid

Another concerning issue about Obrenovac camp, is that the doctor coming everyday does not speak English. A camp is a place with a huge diversity in spoken languages and not everyone knows Serbian. In the Krnjača camp, the doctor allegedly did speak English, however now people have to ask the Commissariat to translate for them. This is highly concerning as it firstly creates a privacy issue but secondly also enhances the risk of mistranslation and thereafter misdiagnosis.

Ostensibly some of the children go to school, however, Collective Aid reported hearing different stories. One girl said that she cannot go to school because she does not have



a notebook. People outside the camp stated they would not go there, because they want an education which they believe isn't possible within the camp. As a person told Collective Aid:

"I need to go, there is no school, (there is) no money in Serbia. There is no school or education here. I can't stay in the camp. I want to go to Germany to study and be an English teacher."

The atmosphere is affected by people having to wait for 7 months to get the asylum interview and some waiting several years for the response. This leads to feelings of exhaustion and frustration.

People have been reporting about not receiving pocket money – neither in the former camp or at Obrenovac. This is reportedly the same for everyone in the camp. They are not given financial support, even though they have the right to receive it.

Four preventable deaths in Sjenica camp

This year four persons passed away in Sjenica camp, reportedly due to neglect. Residents have repeatedly raised concerns about this alarming trend; however, the inadequate medical situation remains unchanged. The conditions of the camp have already been denounced by civil society and NGOs including Collective Aid. Recently, on the 8th of July, 2025, Ali, a long-term resident of Sjenica, passed away. Collective Aid is not operating in the camp, however according to their exchange with organisations present, this happened after having received inadequate medical care and inhuman treatment of camp staff.

No Name Kitchen reported in their social media about the four persons who passed away:

- "Sissi", a 34-years old resident of Sjenica camp, passed away after lack of intervention to him being sick for a long period, on the 30th December 2024.
- A Moroccan man passed away after being refused entrance to the center on the 19th February 2025.
- Moustafa, a 25-27 years old resident of the camp, died after no reactions to the residents' concerns about him being severely unwell and not eating, on the 1st of May 2025.
- Ali passed away after being unwell both psychically and mentally without being supported but merely isolated, on the 8th July 2025.



The doctor is said to ignore health emergencies and the concerns being raised about health conditions of residents, not informing people what kind of medication they're being given, limiting the accessibility by not informing residents of the working hours and having periods with complete absence of any doctor in the camp.

The conditions in the camp are also dominated by lacking a minimum level of hygiene, and also being psychological tearing to live there as the residents are living together with people passing away because of the conditions in camp. The provision of such conditions to people on the move illustrates a profound disregard for their fundamental rights and, ultimately, for their very survival.

Disclaimer: This chapter has been written by Collective Aid using secondary sources publicly available online, primarily from No Name Kitchen. References and links to their social media posts have already been included in the text.



Temporary Reception Centres in Bosnia-Herzegovina

There are currently three Temporary Reception Centres (TRCs) operating in Bosnia-Herzegovina, with a combined capacity to accommodate 4,012 individuals. Two of these centres are located in the Sarajevo Canton:

- Blažuj TRC – for single men (capacity: 1,700)
- Ušivak TRC – for families and unaccompanied minors (capacity: 800)

In the Una Sana Canton, only Lipa TRC remains operational (capacity: 1,512), following the recent closure of Borići TRC. Borići previously accommodated families and unaccompanied minors (capacity: 580), but all residents have since been relocated to Lipa as part of the consolidation of both camps.

Despite the high capacity of each reception centre, since the beginning of the year occupancy across all camps has remained low, averaging at around 600 individuals per week according to IOM situational report figures. These persistently low numbers were a significant factor in the decision to consolidate Lipa and Borići, with ongoing discussions about the possibility of a similar consolidation in the Sarajevo Canton.

Despite reduced numbers, however, a significant number of people continue to transit through the Balkan Route. It is therefore essential that TRCs in Bosnia-Herzegovina remain operational in order to safeguard the human rights, dignity, and safety of people on the move.

Closure of Borići and conditions in Lipa Temporary Reception Centre

Between August 13th and 14th, Borići TRC (located in Bihać) was officially closed in what a representative from Medical Volunteers International described as a '48-hour thunderstorm' [2]. They explained how the closure was marked by heavy police and military presence in surrounding areas, and many residents, reportedly unaware of the consolidation plans, chose to go 'on game' to Croatia rather than relocating to Lipa camp.

[2] Medical Volunteers International is a non-governmental organisation working in northern Bosnia-Herzegovina. They regularly share and validate information on field conditions with the Collective Aid team in Sarajevo, helping to ensure consistent and reliable monitoring of people on the move.



Prior to the closure of Borići, several concerns were raised by organisations about the potential negative impacts that this move could have on its residents. In June, Collective Aid met with Human Rights Watch to discuss the transition. Their representative expressed significant concerns regarding:

- Lipa's geographical isolation – the camp is situated 23km from Bihać, and there are no public transport links.
- Access to basic amenities – families with children and elderly individuals will now need to walk long distances along high-speed roads which poses a huge risk for their safety.
- Access to education – while there have been proposals to arrange bus transport to take children to schools, or to have teachers coming to the camp, this solution appears logistically unrealistic, especially during winter or when numbers rise.

In addition to logistical concerns, serious safety issues have also been reported in Lipa camp in recent months. On May 15th, a man from Pakistan died from stab wounds following a violent altercation involving multiple individuals inside the camp. This incident raises questions about the adequacy of current security measures, and whether sufficient steps have been taken to protect the wellbeing of relocated families and minors now residing in the TRC.

Following the closure of Borići, there is also a risk that more individuals may resort to living in squats or informal settlements. Whilst this remains speculative at present, it is a trend that will require close monitoring in the coming months.

Recently, Collective Aid received reports from Lipa highlighting the difficult living conditions in the camp. Concerns have been raised about the quality of food and the availability of essential support. These accounts underscore the challenges faced by families and minors following the consolidation of the two reception centres and call into question the camp's ability to meet even the most basic needs of those residing there.

Conditions in Blažuj Temporary Reception Centre

Since the beginning of the year, members from partner organisation Collective Aid have spoken to multiple individuals about their experiences in Blažuj. While the camp is often viewed as 'good' or 'better' compared to facilities in other European countries – such as Bulgaria, Greece, or Serbia – this is likely attributed to a normalisation of



substandard living conditions, rather than genuine adequacy. Indeed, many residents have reported serious concerns regarding limited medical services, poor hygiene, unsuitable food provisions, and safety.

"The camp is in ruins"

– A Moroccan respondent about Blažuj TRC.

Medical support

Speaking to a BVMN reporter, one Syrian man, who suffers with Glaucoma, said he was unable to get the eyedrops he needed for the first two months that he was staying at Blažuj TRC. He noted that everyday, the doctors in the camp would tell him *'come back tomorrow'*, and it was only once he applied for asylum in Bosnia-Herzegovina that he received some external support. Similarly, a second respondent suffering with haemorrhoids reported that he was consistently told by camp doctors to return the next day, yet he never received any medication or support for his condition.

Multiple other respondents have also reported that the doctors give the same medication (usually paracetamol) to everyone, regardless of their medical issue.

One Egyptian man stated:

"The doctor here is very bad. They just give paracetamol for all things."

This, coupled with multiple reports expressing that *'the doctors do nothing'*, suggests a worrying lack of medical support for both simple and complex medical concerns.

"They treat us like less than dogs"

– A respondent about camp doctors at Blažuj TRC.



Living conditions

The limited access to medical support is further compounded by poor living conditions within the camp. BVMN reporters have received consistent complaints about bedbug infestations in the rooms, with many respondents displaying multiple bite marks.

One Turkish man, affected by bedbugs, commented on the severity of the situation:

"I slept in the forest for a week, rest assured, it's cleaner and safer."



Unhygienic Conditions in the Blažuj Reception Center, Credit: Collective Aid



A Moroccan respondent echoed similar sentiments, noting that people often take their duvets and sleep outside, rather than staying in the rooms. Additionally, an Afghan man reported the presence of rats in his room, and stated that he had also been bitten as a result.



Camp Conditions in Blažuj Reception Center.
Credit: Collective Aid



Room in the Blažuj Reception Center, Credit:
Collective Aid

Due to the frequency of insect bites, many individuals in the camp seek medical attention to manage symptoms. However, they repeatedly report that camp doctors often fail to provide adequate treatment, leaving them with no choice but to either endure the discomfort or seek care outside of the camp.



"Once they gave us salami and it smelled bad. We gave it to the cats and dogs, but even they refused to eat it"

- A respondent commenting on food provisions in Blažuj TRC.



Meal Provision in Blažuj Reception Center. Credit: Collective Aid.



Security

The June BVMN Monthly Report highlighted a rise in violence among people on the move, underscoring the growing sentiments of insecurity experienced by individuals staying in the camp. Over the past several months, multiple shootings between rival gangs near the TRC have contributed to this atmosphere of fear and instability.

One respondent shared:

"I was told that they were kidnapping people here. I was told that there were gang members inside"

In light of such concerns, many individuals reported being afraid to both stay inside the camp and to leave it, often choosing to move in groups of five or more for protection. BVMN reporters have also documented numerous instances of fights breaking out in the centre, with two Afghan men stating that *'this is common in the camp'*. This suggests a troubling normalisation of violence in a space that is meant to offer safety and protection.

In addition to the fear of physical violence, many individuals have reported instances of theft from within the camp – particularly of mobile phones. This has deepened the sense of insecurity in the TRC, and is arguably linked to broader patterns of abuse – namely violent pushbacks – where phones are often stolen or destroyed.

"Anyone can enter [the camp] without hesitation. This is so wrong"

– A respondent talking about security in Blažuj TRC.

Reports from individuals staying in the camp point to persistent service gaps and a deteriorating living environment, which is exacerbated by violence and a sense of abandonment. The situation in Blažuj TRC continues to raise serious concerns regarding safety, hygiene, access to medical care and food adequacy.



Possible closure of Blažuj Temporary Reception Centre

As noted in the June BVMN report, a recent surge in violence around Blažuj TRC prompted calls for the camp's immediate closure, however, no further updates on this have been released. Some argued that shutting down the TRC without providing viable alternative accommodation would likely push people on the move into squats and informal settlements, therefore increasing risks for both people on the move and local residents.

Instead, there appears to be a more deliberate effort underway to improve the camp's security infrastructure. One respondent staying in the camp reported that stronger fencing, floodlights, and an alarm system had recently been installed – however, this has not been officially confirmed. As with broader developments in the Una Sana Canton, the situation warrants continued monitoring to ensure transparency and the safety of people on the move.

Conditions in Ušivak Temporary Reception Centre

Ušivak Temporary Reception Centre is currently the only facility in Bosnia-Herzegovina exclusively accommodating families and unaccompanied minors. There is limited publicly available reporting on conditions inside the centre, and conversations recorded by BVMN reporters from individuals residing in the camp tend to be neutral, with most descriptions lacking strong positive or negative sentiment.

Photos included in the album provide visual insight into current conditions and available facilities. The photographs included here were taken by politicians during planned visits to the camps. Based on previous experience, it is common practice for facilities to be cleaned and organized in advance of such visits, meaning the images may not accurately reflect everyday living conditions.



Family Units in Ušivak Reception Center. Credit: Provided to Collective Aid by political actors.



Sewing room in Ušivak Reception Center.
Credit: Provided to Collective Aid by political actors.



Toilette in Ušivak Reception Center.
Credit: Provided to Collective Aid by political actors.

Conclusion

As Bosnia-Herzegovina continues to serve as both a transit and host country along the Balkan Route, it is essential that temporary reception centres remain open and provide safe, dignified spaces for people on the move.

Currently, reports from individuals across multiple sites consistently highlight recurring concerns, particularly around inadequate medical care, poor living conditions, and security risks. It is therefore essential that continued monitoring of conditions in TRCs is carried out, to ensure that they uphold international human rights standards and that people on the move have access to safe and dignified shelter.



Eviction order from the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum

Last May, the former Ministry of Migration and Asylum issued a verbal directive ordering the eviction of beneficiaries of International Protection and rejected asylum seekers from state-run camp facilities.

This order was condemned by 35 civil society organisations for placing those targeted at high risk of destitution and homelessness, as the notice did not include any guidance on alternative accommodation solutions or safeguards, paving the way for obvious breaches of their fundamental rights.

Beneficiaries of International Protection affected

This eviction order affects different groups of people in diverse ways. First, beneficiaries of International Protection are legally required to leave state-run facilities within 30 days of receiving their asylum decision. In practice, however, this timeframe is often insufficient to obtain the necessary documentation from the Greek administration that would enable them to access alternative housing. Moreover, the number of such alternative accommodation options is extremely limited.

On the side of the Greek state, the HELIOS+ programme, run by the IOM and the Greek Ministry of Migration and Asylum –successor of the HELIOS programme, which concluded on November 30th 2024–, was launched only at the end of May 2025. It is intended to support the integration of beneficiaries of International Protection and Temporary Protection in Greece, including through accommodation assistance, language courses and employability support. Yet, at the time of writing, the programme was not fully operational. The gap between programmes meant that for six months there was no state-provided housing support at all, and even now, the programme continues to be in its early stages, with long delays before beneficiaries can actually secure accommodation. These waiting times, combined with the broader lack of housing options and support in Greece, are issues repeatedly raised on the hotlines operated by BVMN member organisation Mobile Info Team (MIT).

In addition, HELIOS+ is designed to cater for a maximum of 4,323 beneficiaries –only 3,7% of the total of beneficiaries of International and Temporary Protection in Greece [3]. The effectiveness of the programme, which has also raised concerns related to its

[3] According to Refugee Support Aegean, the total number of Beneficiaries of International Protection in Greece at the end of 2024 was 83,895, and 32,572 Beneficiaries of Temporary Protection.



short-term nature, specific eligibility requirements and potential bureaucratic barriers, appears marginal at best. Moreover, recently, the government signaled a shift toward even stricter measures. Minister of Migration and Asylum Thanos Plevris announced a “phase of disincentives”, and questioned continued subsidies for those already granted asylum, suggesting that HELIOS+ financial support could be cut, and insisting that beneficiaries should seek employment instead. These statements reflect a further policy move away from integration support toward immediate labor participation and deterrence.

Housing support from civil society organisations is also extremely limited, mostly due to funding constraints and capacity shortages. Meanwhile, municipal homeless shelters are hardly accessible because of similar capacity issues, high and onerous eligibility requirements including the possession of documents that lengthy bureaucracy makes hard to obtain, and the prerequisite of knowing Greek or English.

At the end of June, following a report from the Greek Council for Refugees (GCR), the Greek Ombudsman pointed out “the risk of homelessness and economic hardship” created by evictions and called on the authorities to “prevent [recognised refugees] from becoming homeless and exposed to conditions that violate their fundamental rights and cause them further trauma”.

Rejected asylum seekers at risk of arrest

The situation becomes even more precarious for people without recognised status, for they have no pathway to access formal services such as employment, healthcare or social allowances. Their eviction from state-run facilities exposes them to a high risk of arrest and prolonged detention in Pre-Removal Detention Centres. This risk is heightened by the recent increase in police operations targeting individuals considered to be “residing illegally” in Greece over the past month in the area of Thessaloniki. This hostile environment is likely to further deteriorate if the Ministry of Migration and Asylum’s proposed draft law is passed by the Greek Parliament. Among other changes, the draft law aims to impose stronger penalties on and sanction the detention of persons for irregular stay. This would push people affected by the eviction order further into hiding and limit their ability to build and reside in collective informal settlements, as such arrangements make individuals more visible and therefore more easily targeted. Additionally, with few options for regularising their status, homelessness also implies higher risks of exploitation, abuse, and human trafficking.



It should also be noted that the eviction orders issued in May did not necessarily take ongoing legal procedures into account. Individuals awaiting appointments to submit a subsequent application, or those who had lodged appeals against a rejection decision, reported receiving eviction notices nonetheless. These problems are compounded by delays in administrative and judicial proceedings, which stem from mismanagement on the part of the Greek state.

Evictions from various camps on the mainland

In the past, considering the vast difficulties people faced in securing alternative accommodation, camp authorities in some facilities across Greece occasionally allowed people outside of the asylum procedure to remain in the centres temporarily while searching for solutions. However, the eviction order issued in May seems to have marked a shift to this approach, hardening the authorities' practices. According to various reports from camp residents in May, people were notified of their eviction only a few days –in some cases, just one day– in advance. These notices applied indiscriminately to single men, women, families with children, and even individuals with serious health conditions. As an example, MIT has been in contact with a family of five, including three children, living in a camp in the Athens area, who received an eviction notice accompanied by threats of police intervention.

Since the eviction order, several concerning episodes have been reported to various organisations across Greece. At the end of June, for instance, mass evictions were reportedly carried out from Malakasa, a facility right outside of Athens, accompanied by police pressure, threats and removal of residents' personal belongings.

However, it is important to note that, while evictions from state-run facilities have taken on new significant proportions, they are not a new phenomenon in Greece. It is not rare for civil society organisations to receive reports from people being evicted from camps simply for being absent for a few days –often for work purposes. Such practices leave people homeless and in dire conditions, particularly as most state-run facilities are located far from urban centres where some support might be available. Transport options are limited and expensive, further isolating those affected. Moreover, as highlighted by RSA, there are no official statistics on general homelessness in Greece, making it difficult to hold the Greek state accountable.



Living conditions in mainland camps

Meanwhile, living conditions in mainland camps remain appalling. Last April, MIT and Refugee Legal Support (RLS) published a follow-up to their July 2024 report on camp conditions, highlighting the absence of any improvements. In particular, the organisations drew attention to the deterioration of camp structures and equipment – including holes in containers and non-functioning air conditioning–, cockroach infestations, and the systemic lack of essential items ranging from clothing to soap and feminine hygiene products. They also reported that the food provided is often inedible, while access to healthcare remains critically limited. These shortcomings are compounded by the inadequacy of the accommodation for people with disabilities, and the complete absence of support tailored to their needs.

In July 2024, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum, in cooperation with IOM, launched the Hippocrates programme to address medical and psychosocial needs in 31 state-run facilities. However, significant gaps in healthcare provision persist, mainly due to the lack of interpretation during medical consultations, both with Hippocrates staff and in hospital settings.

Samos

General reception conditions

In July 2025, the Samos Closed-Controlled Access Centre (CCAC) continued to be unlivable. People on the move remained subject to periods of isolation in a sub-section of the facility and to *de facto* detention up to 25 days upon arrival. Clients of BVMN member organisation I Have Rights (IHR) reported a lack of access to basic services during –and even after– the isolation period.

In line with previous testimonies from residents of the CCAC, this month, a client described that meals continue to be distributed twice a day. Breakfast, consisting of juice and bread, was given at 8:00 a.m. However, if people arrived late, there was no more juice available. The second meal distribution occurred between 12:00 and 2:00 p.m., when both lunch and dinner were provided. Additionally, two large bottles of water were handed out per day. The client noted that the food was of very poor quality and often required further cooking. They also reported long queues for food, even under the scorching sun with high temperatures. The undignified distribution systems and lack of adaptation to summer conditions resulted in some people skipping meals last month, due to the difficulty in standing in line under the sun for such long times.



In terms of access to running water, multiple clients reported it was only available from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. and again from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Waiting times in the showers were sometimes long due to some of them not working.

Moreover, two clients, including a pregnant woman, reported having to queue for an average of 30–45 minutes without water in order to leave the camp. Additionally, on July 10th, exit from the CCAC was restricted due to a power outage in the facility. A client informed the IHR team at 10.30 am that they had already been waiting at the CCAC exit for 2h30 to be let out. They later reported that the electricity came back up at around 1 pm.

Conditions of isolation in the sub-section of the Samos CCAC

The conditions in the isolation zone of the CCAC continue to be even more appalling than those of the general facility. Several clients shared experiences marked by unhygienic conditions, lack of access to essential items –such as beds– and restriction of freedom.

In July, a pregnant client reported to IHR caseworkers that she had been held in isolation for three days with 43 people in one room. She described that, during the first 24 hours, there was nowhere to wash herself because the bathroom was ‘so dirty,’ and that she was forced to sleep with just one blanket on the floor.

In two other cases, clients also stressed that they had ‘no way of showering and even the toilet had no water.’ The only water access they had was drinking water. These people described having been under the control of Greek authorities for one night on a different island before they were transferred to the Samos CCAC. The clients reported having to sleep with 35 people in one room. This situation was particularly concerning, as it extended the period of *de facto* detention in state-run facilities. Notably, the detention time imposed on people before they are issued a restriction of freedom order is unlawful. Moreover, without a restriction order, this additional time under the authorities' custody is not officially counted toward the 25 days stipulated in the restriction of freedom orders issued at some point after arrival in the CCAC. In the case of these two clients, they were allowed to leave the facility after one week in the Samos CCAC.

Another family reported surviving violence and imprisonment in inhumane conditions in Turkey. Upon arrival at the Samos CCAC, they were placed in isolation for two days and were not allowed to leave the centre for a total of five days. IHR's clients described the



isolation room as a small area shared with approximately 25 people. During this period, the main issue was, again, the washroom and bathroom, as there was often no running water and the facilities were unhygienic. It was reported that no one cleaned the area, and everyone had to use their own tissues. After the isolation period, the family was transferred to another room meant for all four members, but which had no beds. One of the clients reported suffering from severe back pain, which worsened due to the lack of a bed. IHR sent an email to the authorities requesting that a bed be provided. Another client reported being placed in isolation for four days with five people in one container. Again, they had no beds and everyone had to sleep on the floor.

Lastly, the experience of another client, a survivor of human trafficking, not identified as such by the Greek state and who reported feeling unsafe for three days while in isolation, continues to underscore the absence of adequate protection mechanisms.

Registration and asylum procedure

In the month of July, four clients of IHR described having their phones confiscated for a few hours upon arrival, while 23 clients reported delays in their asylum interviews. This constitutes a systematic issue affecting the asylum procedure across Greece, extending the period of uncertainty under undignified conditions for people on the move. Moreover, a client complained about being interrupted in their asylum interview and not allowed to tell their whole story.

As a significant development, Metadrasi announced the suspension of its interpretation services from the Registration and Identification Services (RIS) after an eight-month delay in staff payments. This is particularly concerning, as their services were crucial for registering people on the move with the police upon arrival at the Samos CCAC. According to two clients' police notes, Frontex interpreters provided interpretation services and signed the police note. It remains unclear whether Metadrasi's services will resume, as no official communication has been shared regarding this question.

At the end of the month, on July 28th, the CCAC authorities announced a large transfer operation of around 200 people. On July 30th, clients reported a big transfer. The day after, residents were not allowed to leave the camp, as CCAC authorities announced a large-scale count of everyone inside the facility.

**Kos***Housing situation in the CCAC*

On the island of Kos, there have not been any recent reports of forced removals or violent practices of evictions within or around the CCAC. However, the lack of accessible alternatives outside the camp effectively limits freedom of movement and residence for those seeking to leave the CCAC.

The CCAC on Kos remains the primary state-provided accommodation for asylum seekers on the island. Conditions inside the camp have remained largely unchanged. The facility is marked by its undignified living conditions, characterised by a heavily securitized environment, limited access to services and limited personal autonomy.

According to one recent testimony, the facility is still infested with cockroaches. Residents are given a single blanket to sleep with and a single shower serves over 40 people. The respondent also highlighted how once issued an ID card, support is effectively stopped: after 30 days, they are forced to leave the camp. There is no medical insurance, no job assistance, no further help. As the witness puts it: “Ok, you give them an ID card, and then what?”. For those without family, there is nowhere to go. Without money, sometimes not even enough for a travel card, people are left stranded and stuck.

Barriers to housing outside the CCAC

For those seeking to transition out of the CCAC and integrate within the local community, access to housing remains one of the most significant barriers. This issue is exacerbated during the peak tourist season, as rents surge to unaffordable levels and Airbnbs dominate the rental market, leaving very few long-term housing options available.

This is exemplified by a recent experience of a family who returned to Kos to renew their child’s ID. They were unable to find any hotel availability due to high tourist demand, and the few options they located were financially out of reach, with prices for basic accommodation exceeding €100 per night. This illustrates a broader common pattern: people on the move face many obstacles to secure even temporary accommodation on Kos.

While we are not aware of any active evictions currently taking place on Kos, the right to housing remains compromised. The interplay between CCAC policies, rising housing costs, and the scarcity of accessible accommodation outside the camp effectively traps people on the move in completely inadequate living conditions.



Lesvos

Evictions on the island

While, at the time of writing, no evictions have yet taken place from the Mavrovouni CCAC following the order announced by the former Minister of Migration and Asylum Makis Voridis in May –unlike in other camps across the country–, some residents have still received eviction notices from the authorities. Moreover, in the meantime, beneficiaries of International Protection have started getting evicted from their usual accommodation inside the CCAC, ISO box containers, to tents IKEA Refugee Housing Units (RHUs). They are now forced to share these tents with unrelated families and individuals, and they are located in more remote areas of the camp, further away from essential services. By making the situation worse for the residents, the authorities aim to incentivise people to leave by their own means. Notably, residents of the camp stated that many of the ISO box containers they were evicted from, along with several RHUs in more central locations, have remained vacant since the evictions. Legal Centre Lesvos (LCL) reported that a number of its clients chose to leave the facility –and even the country– on their own due to this treatment, despite lacking the means to support themselves outside and despite being eligible for IOM's Helios+ assistance (see the description of the project below), as vulnerable recognized refugees.

Situation and living conditions in Mavrovouni CCAC

Residents of the Mavrovouni CCAC reported that transportation options from the facility are very limited, as buses are infrequent and insufficient, especially during the evenings and Sundays. This situation, aggravated by the usual remoteness of CCACs and other official camps, makes it difficult for residents to access the town centre and essential services only available there, increasing the isolation of people on the move.

The lack of adaptation to the –increasingly– hot summer months in Greece also poses significant challenges for the lives of people in the CCAC, due to the extreme heat and the lack of air conditioning. Even though some assistance was provided by the NGO Eurorelief, that operates within the facility, issues stemming from the poor planning for weather conditions are still significant. Lastly, concerning the healthcare situation in the CCAC, access seems to be increasingly reduced as medical groups working in the CCAC report that the central pharmacy inside the camp will likely be shutting down –excluding the dental pharmacy–, all while shortages in doctors and psychologists continue to grow.



Fire at the Mavrovouni CCAC

On July 29th, a fire broke out in the single women's section of the CCAC. Though the cause of the fire is not yet known, it was thankfully quickly extinguished without anyone being injured. Fenix Humanitarian Legal Aid, which documented the incident, reported that some residents expressed fear and reluctance about returning to the camp. Clients of Fenix shared: "We are so scared, we do not want to go back to the camp. We will not be able to close our eyes at night because what if the fire happens again and we don't wake up this time...".

The Vastria CCAC

In a meeting during his visit to Lesbos, the new Minister of Migration and Asylum Thanos Plevris reiterated that no decision will be taken without the agreement of local communities, emphasizing that the government's approach is now aimed at relieving the Aegean islands rather than imposing new responsibilities. In response, Mayor Panagiotis Christofas reaffirmed the Municipal Council's decision to reject any new structure, with particular reference to the Vastria facility being built within the forested area. Regional Governor Kostas Moutzouris welcomed the Minister's statement as a positive step but stressed that the will of the local population remains unchanged: Lesbos and the North Aegean islands will not accept detention centres that confine refugees and migrants. Other regional representatives echoed this position, condemning any move towards the operation of Vastria and warning against a return to the conditions of previous years.

Meanwhile, the completion deadline for the Vastria CCAC had been postponed once more, with the target date set for July 31st. Current construction activity is taking place near the Vastria landfill on Lesbos, where work is underway to install underground electrical systems for the facility. Despite the visible progress on site, the Municipality of West Lesbos has not officially confirmed nor denied its approval of the project. This lack of clarity has fueled concerns over transparency, especially since it contrasts sharply with the public opposition and legal challenges lodged by the Municipality of Mytilene and the North Aegean Regional Authority against the Vastria camp. The silence of West Lesbos authorities is seen by some as a potential strategy to quietly enable the project, further eroding public trust. Adding to these concerns, a recent law now permits the approval of desalination plants for detention centres or CCACs to proceed directly through the Municipal Water Supply and Sewerage Company (DEYAL), even in cases where DEYAL or local authorities object. This legal adjustment has clear implications for Vastria, effectively bypassing local veto power and ensuring construction continues.



The centre's development has followed a distinct pattern. Over the past four years, each time courts or regulators raised obstacles, the Ministry of Migration and Asylum adjusted technical details or introduced new legal provisions to keep construction on track. Environmental protections, Council of State rulings, and normal consultation processes were systematically sidestepped, creating a situation where institutional checks no longer operate as intended. While the facility is almost complete, three key elements remain unfinished: the electricity connection, perimeter security fencing, and an evacuation road. The absence of the last is particularly risky, as the site lies in one of the Mediterranean's most fire-prone forests. Despite environmental conditions requiring such a road, its route has yet to be finalised, leaving thousands of potential residents without a safe exit in case of wildfire.

Despite repeated promises that community consent is essential, the Vastria facility has advanced through legal manoeuvres, technical adjustments, and EU-backed funding, revealing a deep contradiction between official rhetoric and the reality of construction on the ground. More than just another camp, Vastria represents a turning point: the normalisation of isolation, surveillance, and long-term deprivation of liberty as the backbone of Europe's border regime. What is at stake is not only the so-called "management of migration flows", but the transformation of borders themselves —from points of passage into permanent zones of confinement.



The contributing writer for this section on Turkey is Ouadees Hommous, an architect, urbanist, and independent researcher.

Introduction

Turkey continues to host one of the world's largest refugee populations, a role shaped by its geography and its function as both a destination and a key transit country. With approximately 3.6 million forcibly displaced persons, the majority of whom are Syrians under a Temporary Protection (TP) regime, Turkey's migration landscape is a defining feature of its contemporary social and political reality. The 2016 EU-Turkey Statement further cemented the country's position as a central actor in regional "migration management", effectively making it a buffer state for the European Union.

Initially, the policy response, particularly towards Syrians, was framed by a paradigm of temporary hospitality, with refugees designated as "guests". This approach implied a short-term humanitarian challenge that would resolve with the end of the Syrian conflict. However, over a decade later, with millions of refugees having built lives, families, and communities in Turkey, this "guest" status has become a legal fiction detached from reality. The shelter infrastructure and support systems, designed for a transient population, were never equipped for long-term integration. This fundamental mismatch between a temporary legal framework and the reality of a de facto permanent population is a primary structural cause of the current shelter crisis. The system is failing because it is applying temporary tools to a far more long prolonged condition.

This report argues that the shelter situation for refugees and migrants in Turkey has escalated from a chronic challenge of absorption into an acute, multi-layered crisis. The convergence of a severe economic downturn characterized by hyperinflation, the implementation of exclusionary state policies, and a significant rise in social hostility has rendered access to safe, affordable, and dignified shelter increasingly unattainable for a vast portion of this population. The report critiques both the failures of shortsighted state-led initiatives and the harms of the private rental market as offering any viable shelter provision to marginalized and exploited groups.

Geographical distribution

The ability of a refugee or migrant to secure adequate shelter in Turkey is fundamentally determined by their geographical location. State policy, economic forces, and social networks have created distinct zones of vulnerability across the country, each with a unique set of challenges.



Southeastern border provinces

Provinces such as Gaziantep, Hatay, and Kilis have historically been the primary entry points and settlement areas for Syrians. They continue to host a high density of refugees due to their proximity to Syria and established family and social networks. While these provinces were the original site of Turkey's Temporary Accommodation Centers (TACs), the camp-based model has been largely phased out. Today, fewer than 2% of Syrians reside in these state-run facilities. The remaining TACs are often characterized by restrictions on freedom of movement and limited access to livelihoods, making them an undesirable option for most. Furthermore, many such camps have been reported as sites of torture and inhumane treatment, an extension of Turkey's EU-funded detention and deportation infrastructure.



Harran Temporary Accommodation Center, Şanlıurfa. Source: [Cumhuriyet](#)

The policy shift away from camps, without the corresponding development of adequate urban social housing, effectively transferred the burden of shelter from the state directly onto the hyper-competitive and unregulated private rental market. The devastating February 2023 earthquakes severely exacerbated this precarious situation, destroying a significant portion of the limited and often substandard housing stock. This has created intense competition for rentals between the refugee and host communities, driving up prices and pushing many into even more precarious living conditions.



Major urban centers

Economic hubs like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir attract large numbers of migrants and refugees due to perceived livelihood opportunities and the presence of established diaspora communities. However, shelter in these cities is entirely market-driven and fraught with risk. Hyperinflation has caused rental prices to skyrocket, with costs in Istanbul being 50-100% higher than in smaller cities. This economic pressure is compounded by significant legal barriers, including registration restrictions that make it impossible for many to legally reside in the city, pushing them into informal, overcrowded, and exploitative housing arrangements.

Satellite cities

As part of a state policy of dispersal and control, non-Syrian international protection applicants are often mandatorily assigned to smaller "satellite cities" in regions like Central Anatolia. This policy effectively contains refugee populations away from major economic centers and support networks. International protection applicants — as with those under temporary protection — require state permission to travel outside their assigned region. They face geographic isolation, a severe lack of livelihood opportunities, minimal NGO presence, and a stock of low-quality housing. These conditions create a strong incentive for secondary, "irregular" movement towards major urban centers, despite the legal risks involved, as individuals seek to escape conditions of forced destitution.

These distinct geographical realities are not accidental but are, in large part, the product of deliberate state policy. The "satellite city" system for non-Syrians and the neighborhood registration closures in urban hubs (further elaborated below) function as a coordinated system of spatial engineering. This system is designed to manage and control the presence of migrant populations rather than to foster any genuine integration. By isolating some groups and concentrating others in specific deprived urban pockets, these policies actively create and reinforce patterns of segregation and vulnerability.

Hyperinflation and the housing affordability gap

Turkey's ongoing economic crisis has become the single most significant driver of shelter insecurity, affecting both refugee and host communities but with disproportionate severity for the most vulnerable. Persistent hyperinflation and currency devaluation have led to a dramatic increase in the cost of all basic necessities, placing dignified housing beyond the reach of millions.



The surge in rental prices has been particularly acute. Nationwide, rental costs increased by an astonishing 583% between 2019 and 2023, with metropolitan areas seeing an average increase of nearly 700%. The increased population of migrants and refugees in many regions contributed to increased demand, especially in the low-cost housing sector, which further accelerated price hikes in the very market segment upon which they and low-income local residents depend. This has created a severe affordability gap. The average monthly cost of basic survival in Istanbul far exceeds the typical income for someone employed in the informal sector — the income source for a great number of migrants and refugees — where wages are often below the legal minimum.

This structural deficit forces households into an impossible "shelter-or-sustenance" dilemma. Families must choose between paying rent and affording adequate food, healthcare, or education for their children. This pressure manifests in the daily lives of refugee households, creating a state of perpetual anxiety over eviction. The power dynamic is skewed heavily in favor of landlords, who can demand arbitrary rent increases with little fear of legal challenge from tenants with precarious legal or financial status. Families might be reducing their food consumption to meet rental obligations. The psychological toll of this insecurity is immense, characterized by chronic stress and the constant fear of homelessness.

This dilemma drives predictable and harmful negative coping mechanisms. Families accumulate unsustainable debt, pull children out of school to contribute to household income, accept dangerous and exploitative labor conditions, and suffer from food insecurity. Furthermore, it forces them into dangerously overcrowded and substandard housing — such as damp basements or unfinished buildings — as the only financially viable option, leading to severe negative health outcomes, including respiratory illnesses and psychological distress. The housing crisis is thus a direct catalyst for child labor, malnutrition, and a broader public health emergency.

The Politics of Exclusion: state policies and housing instability

Beyond the severe economic pressures, specific state policies and enforcement practices actively undermine housing security for refugees and migrants, creating a landscape of legal precarity and fear.

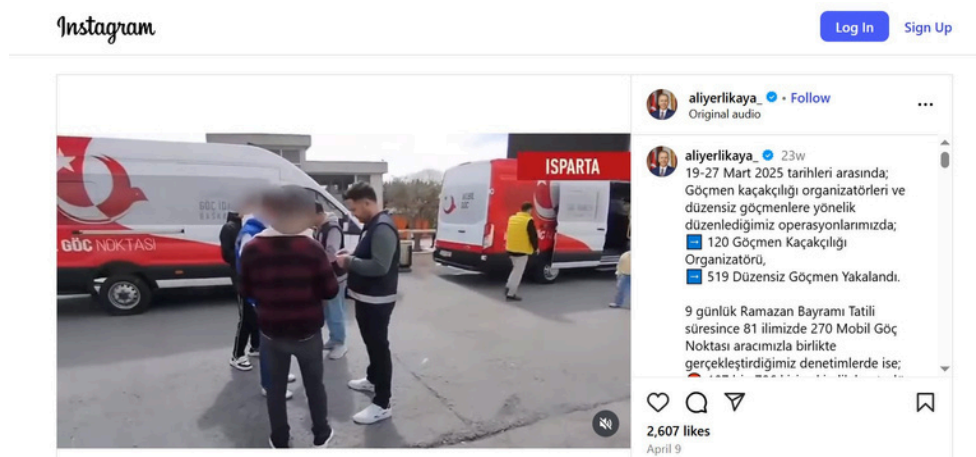


"Closed Neighborhoods": administrative barriers as a tool of control

The Turkish government has implemented a policy that closes certain neighborhoods to new registration for foreign nationals, including those under Temporary Protection. This measure is triggered when the registered foreign population in a neighborhood exceeds a 20% threshold of the local population. As of mid-2025, this policy affected approximately 1,169 neighborhoods nationwide, including 54 in Istanbul. While the stated goals are to ensure demographic balance and regulate the housing market, the practical consequences are severe. The policy prevents newly arrived individuals from legally settling in areas where they may have crucial social support networks and creates a trap for existing residents. A family cannot legally move to a better apartment if it is located in another "closed" neighborhood, effectively locking them into areas with poor living conditions.

Securitization and displacement

In parallel, the Turkish Ministry of Interior has significantly intensified its highly publicised crackdown on "irregular migration." This includes the deployment of "mobile migration point" vehicles for on-the-spot identity and address verification, and a sharp increase in arrests and deportations. Between June 2023 and April 2025, approximately 260,000 irregular migrants were deported, marking a historic high. This heightened enforcement creates an atmosphere where any interaction with the state is perceived as a risk.



Screenshot from an Instagram video post by Interior Minister Ali Yerlikaya shows a montage of Mobile Migration Point vehicles with authorities conducting identity performing checks in various public spaces across different cities in Turkey over the Ramadan public holiday period. Source: [Ali Yerlikaya Instagram](#)



This environment directly empowers landlords, as a tenant aware that a police check could reveal an address registration discrepancy — a common issue — is effectively silenced. They become unable to report hazardous living conditions or contest illegal rent hikes, as the risk of engaging with authorities is perceived as greater than the risk of enduring exploitation.

The government's strict enforcement of address registration, combined with the threat of deportation, has been effectively weaponized. A simple administrative lapse, such as a landlord failing to promptly update a tenant's registration, can have catastrophic consequences, potentially leading to the cancellation of legal status and initiation of removal procedures. Consequently, state administrative and security policies inadvertently empower exploitative actors in the housing market and strip refugees of their de facto rights as tenants.

Eviction practices and informal shelter networks

The combination of economic desperation and legal vulnerability has created a shadow housing system where formal tenant rights are non-existent. Evictions rarely follow formal legal procedures; instead, they are coercive and informal, with landlords as the primary perpetrators. Common practices include threats of deportation, utility shut-offs, and extra-legal lockouts. In the face of these practices, refugees and migrants are forced into a narrow set of precarious informal alternatives as a direct result of state neglect. These include:

- **Overcrowded sublets:** Multiple families share small apartments, with living spaces partitioned by curtains, often managed by an informal broker who charges per-person rates.
- **Substandard dwellings:** Many inhabit damp, unventilated basements, converted storefronts, or rooms within active construction sites, which pose severe health and safety risks.
- **Dependence on exploitative networks:** The search for housing often relies on informal middlemen who charge exorbitant fees for connecting tenants with the few landlords willing to rent to foreigners.

Social Fractures: discrimination and hostility in the housing sector

The economic and political barriers to shelter are compounded by pervasive social discrimination and rising anti-migrant sentiment, which manifest acutely in the housing sector.



"No Foreigners Allowed": Landlord Discrimination

Discrimination by landlords is a systemic and measurable barrier. A field experiment in Istanbul found that housing tour requests by individuals with Syrian names for properties managed by landlords were rejected approximately 35% of the time. In stark contrast, requests from the local Turkish population were rejected at a rate of only 2%. This widespread bias severely constricts the available housing pool for migrants and refugees, forcing them into a much smaller and more competitive segment of the market. Other reports corroborate this trend, indicating a general unwillingness among property owners to rent to migrants, refugees, and other minority groups.

From Scapegoating to Violence

This discrimination is a symptom of broader social tensions. Anti-refugee sentiment, fueled by economic anxieties and political rhetoric, has become increasingly mainstream. Refugees are frequently scapegoated for the economic crisis and the rising cost of rent. This hostile environment has, in the past, escalated into incidents of intercommunal violence, including targeted attacks on refugee homes and businesses, most recently beginning in Kayseri in summer 2024 and spreading to other cities and towns.



A destroyed storefront in Antalya, July 2024, in the wake of anti-Syrian pogroms that began in Kayseri. Source: Daily Sabah



These dynamics create a vicious cycle. Widespread discrimination funnels migrants and refugees into a limited number of neighborhoods, often through informal networks. This process, amplified by the state's "closed neighborhood" policy, leads to the very residential concentration and segregation that authorities claim to be preventing. The resulting hyper-visibility of refugee communities in certain districts can then fuel further resentment from segments of the majority population, or other marginalized groups. In this way, discrimination is not just a barrier to accessing shelter; it is an engine of segregation that actively undermines social cohesion. This provides fuel to groups looking to stoke divisions and hatred in society, who share no interest in addressing the roots of widespread socio-economic problems.



Policy of zero point of fixation and evictions

The situation in Calais and Grande-Synthe illustrates how state policies deliberately manufacture precarity for people on the move. Through constant evictions, destruction of shelters, and the systematic denial of dignified housing solutions, the French state enforces a cycle of displacement and invisibilisation.

The frequent evictions in Calais and Grande-Synthe stem from France's zero point of fixation policy, which prevents people on the move from forming permanent living sites and aims to make them invisible. This policy acts as a form of deterrence strategy, as it seeks to increase the everyday challenges faced by people on the move in the region, while making them feel that they do not have a place in France. It has been in place since the dismantlement of the so-called Calais Jungle in 2016, and involves the frequent eviction of people on the move from informal living spaces, as well as the destruction of the sites. The evictions are marked by harassment, increased isolation and the violation of fundamental rights, all components of the expansion of securitisation narratives and border enforcement.

Evictions are carried out every 48 hours in Calais, meaning that those staying at the targeted living sites have their tents and personal belongings removed on a regular basis. Moreover, they are often left with no housing alternative whatsoever. Between January and July 2025, at least 404 living sites have been evicted based on the French "flagrante delicto" procedure (Article 53 of the French code of criminal procedure). Currently, in Calais, evictions based on "flagrance", or flagrante delicto, take place every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Under French law, this procedure is meant to apply when a crime is currently being committed or has just been committed. In this case, the alleged offense involves a group settling—whether temporarily or otherwise—on land owned by a municipality or a private owner, with the intention of establishing a permanent residence. The maximum response time is 48 hours, which 'justifies' the nearly daily evictions in Calais. Consequently, the police are meant to carry out an investigation of the crime, which should involve gathering evidence of the offence, identifying perpetrators, and if necessary, carrying out arrests. However, evictions constitute a violation of this law, as such an intervention should not involve the eviction of people from their place of residence, for this is not an investigative measure provided for in the Criminal Procedure Rules.

In this way, the French state misuses and weaponizes the law to evict people from their living sites, while taking away their shelter and personal possessions. As the French Defender of Rights, an independent institution set up to ensure the protection of rights



put it, 'while the detection of offences may lead to arrests, criminal proceedings cannot be used as a means of eviction' (2018). Accompanied by the Border Police, the riot police, and the National Police, a cleaning team mandated by the state seizes personal belongings, including tents, tarps, sleeping bags and blankets. Thus, according to observational data gathered by BVMN member organisation Human Rights Observers (HRO), between January and July 2025, at least 785 tents and tarps were seized by the police in Calais, including families and children's tents. Meanwhile, following evictions resulting from "flagrante delicto" procedures, no alternative accommodation or social assessment is provided by the state.



Tent taken away during an eviction. Source: HRO

In the region of Grande-Synthe, large-scale evictions are carried out on an almost weekly basis (at least 55 living sites evicted in this way between January and July 2025), while they are also implemented in Calais on a regular -though less frequent- basis (at least 10 living sites evicted in this way between January and July 2025). These evictions are carried out in a very similar way to the ones based on "flagrante delicto", and by the same perpetrators, but on a larger scale. The living site is destroyed, and all personal belongings are taken. Modifications are also often made to the living sites, aimed at making them unlivable: exposing people to even harsher conditions and inevitably forcing people to move on. Rocks are regularly installed, trees are cut down, and barbed wire is placed on the ground of living sites (as happened on May 28th in



Grande-Synthe), in order to prevent or hinder the setting up of tents. Throughout the month of May, a chainsaw was used on several occasions, together with other tools to destroy the living sites, as well as the informal communal facilities. Meanwhile, in Calais, a water container provided by Calais Food Collective was destroyed during an eviction on July 28th, underscoring the authorities' disregard for the access of people on the move to essential services and resources.



Rocks located to prevent the setting up of tents on a living site. Source: HRO

Different procedures apply depending on whether the living sites are on private or public property but, regardless of the status of the land, the authorities always exploit the supposed urgency of the situation, as a reason for the eviction, and to speed up the process. If the living site is located on private property, the residents are not given prior notice of the eviction, since it is intended to be a swift decision and therefore those affected are not consulted. The reasons put forward for this urgency are the dangerous or unsanitary nature of the living site, or the alleged impossibility of identifying its residents. Therefore, people on the move are given no warning that the eviction will occur, and it can happen at any time.

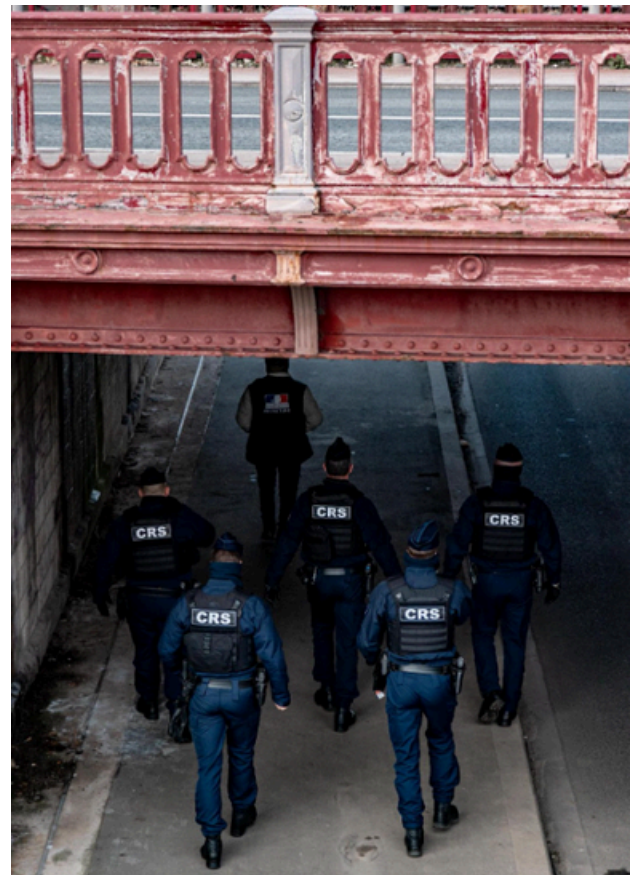
Meanwhile, if the living site is located on public land, the town hall or prefecture will apply for interim measures, and must therefore demonstrate the urgency of the situation, such as risks to health, safety or a danger related to the location. A bailiff



must also make a report. Given that the inhabitants receive a court order in advance, they may contest it at the eviction hearing, and the judge may or may not accept the eviction request. The judge must assess the balance between the owner's right to enjoy their property, and the occupants' right to a private and familial life. In practice, property rights always take precedence, which makes it exceptionally difficult to challenge an eviction. The judge may agree to a delay in the eviction process (one year maximum) but will very rarely overrule it completely.

In the context of evictions that follow legal procedures, a so-called social assessment is mandatory. This measure has been in place since 2012, and consists of an evaluation of the situation of each person and family on a given living site with the goal of understanding everyone's individual needs. Following this procedure, vulnerable people, such as children, people with specific medical needs and single women must be paid particular attention. This assessment must be carried out even if no eviction is planned, so that housing alternatives, access to school, healthcare or employment support can be provided. However, this type of assessment has never been carried out in Calais or Dunkirk, because of the alleged urgent nature of the evictions.

Lastly, both during and outside of evictions, people on the move are often detained by the French Border Police. People may be detained for up to four hours, to have their identity checked, and for up to 24 hours to have their residency permit checked. They will then be released, or placed in Centres de Rétention Administrative, or Administrative Detention Centres, known for their inhumane conditions and police violence, for up to 3 months. This creates a harmful cycle of instability because when people are released, they are left with nothing and must start the process of finding accommodation once again.



CRS officers during an eviction. Source: HRO



State-provided 'solutions'

Large-scale evictions are accompanied by so-called 'mise-à-l'abri,' or sheltering operations. Buses belonging to AFEJI in Grande-Synthe, and to AUDASSE in Calais are present. Both of these organisations are mandated by the state to transport people to Centres d'Accueil et d'Evaluation des Situations (CAES), or Reception and Situation Assessment Centres, which are often far away from the Calais/Dunkirk areas. These 'sheltering operations' are far from adequate. The centres are located far away from the border and are difficult to access by public transport. The spaces offered in them are very limited, and in no way meet the demand for shelter. Moreover, a few people have reported being forced to choose between getting on the bus or being arrested. Finally, these centers are meant for people who want to claim asylum in France. However, for varying reasons, many people on the move in the Calais and Dunkirk areas are unable to legally stay in France. For example, they may have already had an asylum request rejected or their fingerprints taken in a different European Union country, and are therefore unable to claim asylum in France according to the Dublin Regulation. Those not wishing to claim asylum are permitted to stay less than 2 weeks, and usually much less. These so-called sheltering operations are entirely useless, temporary and mainly constitute an active effort by the authorities to move people away from the Franco-British border.

Outside of evictions, the state also provides very limited and inadequate accommodation, which is always temporary and sees people back on the streets within a few days. There is also emergency accommodation provided by the SAMU Social, where people can sometimes stay for one night. There is, however, no alternative accommodation solutions in the region close to the Franco-British border.

It is essential to emphasize that the persistence of evictions and inadequate housing is not an inevitability but the outcome of political choices. A genuine response to these violations would require abandoning the zero point of fixation policy, ending the criminalisation of people on the move, and ensuring access to stable housing and fundamental rights. Until then, people in Calais and Grande-Synthe will continue to face violence, instability, and exclusion at Europe's borders.

Alternative shelters

Given the lack of adequate shelter solutions on the part of the state, throughout the year, 500 to 2000 people are forced to sleep rough in the areas of Calais and Dunkirk. Therefore, people on the move and solidarity groups in Calais and Grande-Synthe have been forced to come up with alternatives.



People on the move often reside in informal living sites with temporary shelters built from tents and tarpaulins, and create fires from discarded wood and plastic. Furthermore, there are multiple squats occupied by people on the move in Calais and Dunkirk. Even though those buildings remained empty and unoccupied before, the French State is insistent on evicting them. One example of this, the so-called 'Orange Squat' in Calais, houses around 350 people on the move. However, it is planned to be evicted by the authorities in September 2025, as a consequence of a complaint by the landowner.

Solidarity organisations in the region, such as Utopia 56, La Capuche, Refugee Women's Centre, Care4Calais and Mobile Refugee Support provide tents on a regular basis. However, it is impossible to provide enough for everyone, given limited supplies and donations. This is further impeded by regular evictions, which see tents in perfectly good condition destroyed and thrown away.



Tent taken away during an eviction. Source: HRO

Finally, there is a network of solidarity houses in Grande-Synthe and Calais, as well as safe houses such as the Maria Skobtsova House, Maison Éphata, Maison Margelle, and Maison Sésame, which aim to respond to the lack of accommodation provided by the state. However, the number of people seeking shelter far surpasses the capacity of these citizen-run initiatives, as each house can only host one or two dozen people, thus merely mitigating the shortcomings of the state.



**Border Violence
Monitoring Network**

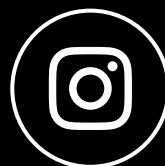
Network structure and contact

BVMN acts as an alliance of organisations in the Balkans and Greece. BVMN is based on the efforts of member organisations working in the field of documentation, media, advocacy and litigation.

We finance the work through charitable grants and foundations, and are not in receipt of funds from any political organisation. The expenditures cover transport subsidies, several part-time paid coordination positions and some costs incurred by member organisations for their contributions to our shared work.

To follow more from the Border Violence Monitoring Network, check out our website for the entire testimony archive, previous monthly reports and regular news pieces. To follow us on social media, find us on Twitter handle @Border_Violence and on Facebook.

For further information regarding this report or more on how to become involved, and for press and media requests please email us at mail@borderviolence.eu.



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